Economy and Society in Early India

Issues and Paradigms

D.N.JHA

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This book is a refreshing study of some of the basic issues in the current historiographical debate on early Indian economy and society. It identifies major trends in the writings on early Indian economic history, and analyses the increasingly oppressive nature of ancient Indian land revenue system and the economic role of early medieval south Indian temples. The author not only makes an assessment of the growing literature on the classical phase of Indian feudalism but also provides a critique of recent studies which claim to demolish the theory of Indian feudalism and seek to replace it by the fragile Chayanovian model of peasant economy and society.

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JY 25 '00

HC433.J53 1993

Jha, D. N. (Dwijendra Narayan), 1940-
Economy and society in early India : issues
1993.

Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt Ltd

SOCIAL SCIENCES

To the memory of my elder brother
Devendra Narain Jha

ISBN 81-215-0552-6
First published 1993
© 1993, Jha, Dwijendra Narayan (b. 1940)

Published, typeset and printed by Munshiram
Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., Post Box 5715,
54 Rani Jhansi Road, New Delhi 110 055.

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Preface

The present work, which brings together the revised and updated versions of some of my papers published in various journals and publications, deals with a cluster of related themes and seeks to intervene, in a modest way, in the ongoing debate on some of the problems of early Indian social and economic history. I have tried to identify the major trends in the writings of early Indian economic history and indicate their limitations and have devoted a separate section to the assessment of D.D. Kosambi's work which remains a trendsetter for economic and social historians. On the basis of our interpretation of the revenue terms occurring in the Maurya and Gupta sources it has been suggested that in course of time taxes tended to become increasingly oppressive and, in a sense, presaged the subjection of peasantry in the early medieval period which has been described as feudal. The debate around the classical phase of Indian feudalism, which has generated a good deal of literature in recent years, has been reviewed and this exercise provides a background to our discussion of the role of temples in relation to agrarian economy and trade in early medieval south India. The challenge posed by some scholars to the concept of Indian feudalism has received our special attention and we have not only joined issue with them on the question of feudalism but have also examined the efficacy of the fragile Chayanovian model of peasant economy and society applied by them to the early medieval situation in south India.

In writing the different chapters of the book I have made use of a part of the data collected by me for a research project sponsored and funded by the Indian Council of Social Science Research, New Delhi. I take this opportunity to place on record my grateful acknowledgement to them. I wish to thank my colleague Professor K.M. Shrimali for his help and advice in planning the present volume and to Professor Maurice Aymard of Maison des Sciences de L'homme for his hospitality at Paris where I

finalized the manuscript of the present book. Shri Pradip K. Choudhary, lecturer in history, Deshbandhu College, Delhi University, deserves my thanks for rendering bibliographical assistance and Shri S.M. Jha for help in preparing the index. To Dr C.M. Jha and his wife Dr (Mrs) R.K. Jha I am indebted in many ways. I do not know how to adequately express my gratitude to my wife, Rajrani, who has always helped me in many silent ways.

D.N. JHA

Delhi
15 August 1992

Abbreviations

ABORI	*Annals of Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*
Ait. Br.	*Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*
AMP	*Asiatic Mode of Production*
Amar.	*Amarakoṣa*
AŚ	*Arthaśāstra*
CCAIHO	*Culture and Civilisation of Ancient India in Historical Outline* by D.D. Kosambi
CII	*Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*
EC	*Epigraphia Carnatica*
EI	*Epigraphia Indica*
IA	*Indian Antiquary*
IESHR	*Indian Economic and Social History Review*
IF	*Indian Feudalism* by R.S. Sharma
IHQ	*Indian Historical Quarterly*
IHR	*Indian Historical Review*
ISIH	*Introduction to the Study of Indian History* by D.D. Kosambi
Jāt.	*Jātaka*
JAOS	*Journal of American Oriental Society*
JAHRS	*Journal of Andhra Historical Research Society*
JAS	*Journal of Asian Studies*
JASB	*Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal*
JBRS	*Journal of Bihar Research Society*
JBORS	*Journal of Bihar and Orissa Research Society*
JBBRAS	*Journal of Bombay Branch of Royal Asiatic Society*
JESHO	*Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient*
JIH	*Journal of Indian History*
JNSI	*Journal of Numismatic Society of India*

Abbreviations

JRAS	*Journal of Royal Asiatic Society*
KI	*Karnataka Inscriptions*
Milinda	*Milindapañho*
PIHC	*Proceedings, Indian History Congress*
PSS	*Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India* by Burton Stein
PGCC	*Political Geography of the Chola Country* by Y. Subbarayalu
Śāk.	*Abhijñānaśākuntalam* of Kālidāsa
SCNI	*Society and Culture of Northern India in the Twelfth Century* by B.N.S. Yadava
Sel. Ins.	*Select Inscriptions bearing on Indian History and Civilisation* by D.C. Sircar
ŚP	*Śāṇti Parva*
SII	*South Indian Inscriptions*
SIHS	*South Indian History and Society : Studies from Inscriptions AD 800-1800* by N. Karashima
Yāj	*Yājñavalkyasmṛti*

1

*Trends in Early Indian Economic Historiography**

The study of early Indian economic history goes back to the middle of the nineteenth century, when Christian Lassen devoted fairly long chapters to industry and commerce in his *Indische Alterthumskunde*, published in four volumes between 1847 and 1861. His monumental history of India down to the fall of Vijayanagara emphasized political history, the economic sections occupying a subsidiary place. He was followed by Richard Fick,[1] who dealt primarily with the social or caste relationships prevalent in north-eastern India in the age of the Buddha and described occupations and trade guilds in about eighty pages. Fick's work was entirely based on the Buddhist birth stories, which were used by Mrs Rhys Davids for a fuller reconstruction of economic life in the sixth century BC.[2] Lassen, Fick and Mrs Rhys Davids were primarily philologists, and whatever they wrote on early Indian economic life was marginal to their main area of interest. Their writings therefore do not indicate any distinct trend in the historiography of early Indian economy.

But many historians of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, who wrote under the auspices of imperial government and had pre-conceived ideas about the Indian past, set a distinct trend in Indian historiography. As early as 1817 James Mill asserted that Indian society had remained substantially unchanged since its inception.[3] His view was shared by several British administrator-historians, including Elphinstone who, under the spell of romanticism, spoke glowingly of the unchanging village communities of ancient India. The administrator-scholars of the nineteenth century firmly believed that the British imperial administration could change the Indian socio-economic set-up by legislation.[4] Their study of the Indian society and economy inspired Marx in his reconstruction of the Asiatic Mode of Production, characterized by the predominance of self-sufficient village economy, the absence of privately owned land, and the complete subjugation of village communities to the state.[5]

The best known exponent of the imperialist view of Indian history was Vincent A. Smith. Trained in more advanced techniques of historical research than were available to his predecessors, Smith devoted himself to the study of the general history of ancient India. But in 1904 he made a significant observation that in ancient times land was owned by the king.[6] This theory suited the British colonial interests and was upheld by several other British historians, who apparently wanted to make out a case for introducing agrarian changes by the British Government in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[7]

On account of their interest in foreign rule British writers after Smith gave special attention to India's connections with Europe and to the Greek rule in India. In numismatics the study of Indo-Greek coins received their chief attention and in the study of trade they were attracted by India's commerce with Europe. In 1916 H.G. Rawlinson wrote his *Intercourse between India and the Western World*, which covered India's commercial contacts with the Graeco-Roman world from the earliest times to the fall of Rome. In 1928 E.H. Warmington produced a full-scale study of the subject on the basis of Greek and Latin sources. His *Commerce between India and the Roman Empire* underlines the importance of the discovery of the monsoon in AD 48 for the Roman navigators and enumerates articles of export and import between India and the Mediterranean region of the Roman empire. The Indo-Roman trade continued to attract the attention of British scholars till the fifties. Thus in 1951 Charlesworth surveyed the evidence relevant to this theme.[8] Three years later Mortimer Wheeler published *Romc beyond Imperial Frontiers*, which mentions the Roman objects found in Arikamedu and other places in south India as a result of excavations since 1946. By implication all these writers provide some justification for the commercial enterprise of the European nations in India in modern times and support the British exploitation of the Indian resources.

The British impact on indigenous writings on early Indian trade is noticeable even in the late sixties as is evident from the work of G.L. Adhya[9] who states that the Indo-Roman trade was mostly carried on by foreigners who came to this country by land and sea routes, collected commodities and sold them to foreign consumers; he finds no evidence of Indian participation in this trade. A necessary corrective to the tendency of portraying Indians as an unenterprising lot was first provided by Motichand as early as 1953. His *Sārthavāha* in Hindi recounts ancient trading activities mainly on the basis of indigenous texts and stresses the role of the trading communities, the vaiśyas, *seṭṭhis* and *gahapatis*, in promoting trade

and commerce. In 1956 D.D. Kosambi drew attention to the location of the western Deccan caves along the trade routes and opined that Buddhist monks played an important role in the economic development of the region during the Satavahana period[10]—a view which fits in with Motichand's general perception of early India's trade history. Recently H.P. Ray has criticized Kosambi for limiting the role of the Buddhist monasteries to the accumulation and supply of capital for trade. She, in fact, has tried to show their deep involvement in trade as well as agriculture.[11] Several other works on trade produced during the last few years imply that Indians actively participated in ancient trade with China, South-East Asia and the Arab world, not to speak of their role in long distance commercial exchange within the country.[12]

The main challenge to the historical models put forth by British historians came from Indian scholars, who, under the influence of the growing nationalist movement, wrote in conscious opposition to the imperialist view of Indian history. The development of nationalism and political consciousness at the turn of the century made the Indian scholars keenly aware of the economic exploitation of India by the British, which formed the theme of the writings of Dadabhai Naoroji and R.C. Dutt. The strong nationalist movement that followed the partition of Bengal in 1905 gave a great impetus to the study of the economic conditions of ancient India.[13] One of the first works which contested the British notion of India's economic past was R.K. Mookerji's *Indian Shipping and Maritime Activity* (Oxford, 1912). In contrast to Rawlinson and Warmington, he drew his material from both Indian and foreign sources. Deficient in intelligent discussion of the economic and technological aspects of the problem,[14] the book sought to prove that "the ancient Indians fully utilized the opportunities presented by nature for the development of maritime activity and established their colonies in other Asian countries." A more forceful attack on the imperialist writers came from K.P. Jayaswal, who was considered a potential contributor to "the seminaries of sedition" and was made to resign his post in the postgraduate teaching department of Calcutta University by the Bengal government in 1912-13. His articles contributed to the *Modern Review* between 1912 and 1915, which later appeared in the form of his famous book *Hindu Polity* in 1924, were clearly directed against the imperialist historical thinking. He strongly criticized Smith's view on the ancient Indian land-ownership. A staunch nationalist, Jayaswal did not like British interference with the landed possessions of the big zamindars and therefore argued that in ancient India there prevailed the individual ownership of land. He did not write any monograph on early

Indian economic history himself, but he was followed by a host of Indian scholars who flooded Indian journals with numerous articles and wrote several theses on the subject.

The period between 1916 and 1925, coinciding with the post-war nationalist and revolutionary movements sweeping across Europe and Asia, marked the peak of our nationalist movement. It saw the publication of several monographic studies of early Indian economic institutions. One of the earliest of these was R.C. Majumdar's *Corporate Life in Ancient India* (Calcutta, 1918). Majumdar sought to establish "beyond doubt that religion did not engross the whole or even an undue portion of the public attention ..." in ancient India. This countered the popular European cliché about India that she had put all her energy into metaphysical speculations.[15] Majumdar tried to demonstrate the importance of corporate economic activities in the form of guilds and criticized Mrs Rhys Davids, who did not come across "any corporate organization of the nature of a guild or Hansa league" in the *Jātaka* literature. Two years later R.K. Mookerji published his *Local Government in Ancient India*, which covered the same ground in more detail. In contrast to Majumdar, he utilized the bulk of accessible epigraphic material, especially from southern India, though a separate study of guilds in that region was made by K.R.R. Sastry.[16]

Though several specific themes of early economic history attracted the attention of Indian scholars in the twenties,[17] comprehensive surveys of early Indian economic institutions and practices were attempted by J.N. Samaddar,[18] M.A. Buch,[19] and N.C. Bandopadhyaya[20] and later by S.K. Das[21] and Pran Nath.[22] Based on literary texts, Buch's book discusses property rights, currency and prices, trade and transport, public finance, etc., though it does not give any idea of the development of the different features of early Indian economy. Bandopadhyaya seeks to make "a systematic study of economic development" in ancient India with special reference to the land system, agriculture, industry and trade. He claims to have divided the economic history of India into periods "from a consideration of the economic forces and phenomena characterizing them".[23] But Das tags on economic history to the political. With the possible exception of Samaddar and Pran Nath[24] all these writers were consciously or unconsciously inspired by a feeling of nationalism, and they tried to present ancient Indian economy in a better light. They argued against the idea that ancient Indians had nothing to do with the problems of material life and sought to prove that modern practices such as banking, partnership, etc., prevailed in early Indian society. They tried to show almost

invariably that economic conditions in ancient India were better than those of their own times.[25]

The Indian nationalist economic historians benefited considerably from a significant new body of evidence made available by the efforts of the British administrators who turned Orientalists. The decipherment of the Brāhmī script by James Prinsep in 1837 opened up the epigraphic sources. The appointment by the government of India of Alexander Cunningham as Archaeological Surveyor in 1861 promoted official and unofficial search for them.[26] By the 1920's a good deal of epigraphic material was made available.[27] But what came as a great boon to nationalist historians was the discovery and the partial publication of the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya in 1905 in the *Indian Antiquary* by R. Shamasastry. The full text of the *Arthaśāstra* was first published by him in 1909, and its first English translation in 1915. The impact of the discovery of this text was so great that from 1910 to 1930 most Indian historians contributed to the literature on it. There followed a spate of books and articles based on the *Arthaśāstra* and these glorified early Indian economic life, partly in reaction to imperialist thinking and partly as a step towards the building up of national self-respect.[28]

One of the earliest writings on the economic content of the *Arthaśāstra* was by H.C. Ray,[29] who detected in Kauṭilya's social and economic policies the elements of modern state-socialism developed in Germany by the social legislation of Bismarck. The Kauṭilyan legislation, according to Ray, embraced all types of production and sought to protect labour against exploitation. He held that to the ancient Indian king the welfare of the people was more important than that of his own. In 1927 Rao Bahadur Rangaswami Aiyangar postulated that the socio-economic idea of the *Arthaśāstra* was a combination of state socialism and a *laissez-faire* policy.[30] In his view Kauṭilya's economic theory guarded against the "fallacies which have cropped up in western economic theory."[31] Therefore he opined that a knowledge and study of ancient Indian economic thought could "counteract the modern tendency to import some of the socialistic doctrines of the West into India."[32]

Of the Indian scholars of the twenties U.N. Ghoshal handled his sources most critically. His *Contributions to the Study of the Hindu Revenue System* (Calcutta, 1929) was the first serious study of the taxation system of India from the Vedic age to *c.* AD 1200, but it gave more emphasis to the Maurya period because of the ready availability of the *Arthaśāstra* material. Ghoshal states that the principles of taxation formulated in early times surpass the achievements of classical antiquity and tend to approach the

ideas of European thinkers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[33] In his opinion the early Indian view (as found in the law books) that taxes are the king's wages for the services of protection is identical with "the fashionable doctrine of the seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe, namely, that taxes are the price paid for the services of the public authorities."[34] Refuting V.A. Smith he states that "there is little, if any positive evidence" to prove that "the burden of taxation in ancient and medieval periods was so heavy as to leave the cultivator a bare margin for subsistence."[35] The idea is repeated by Ghoshal in *The Agrarian System in Ancient India* (Calcutta, 1930), where he states: "... the glimpses which the observations of the foreign travellers furnish into the actual condition of the people generally indicate a happy and contended peasantry."[36] To land-ownership Ghoshal devotes a full chapter and asserts that the brāhmaṇical law not only had a clear notion of the concept of ownership in general but also of the essential qualities and attributes of private ownership of land.[37] He does not give any credence to the foreign accounts which indicate the prevalence of royal ownership of land in ancient India.[38] A more eloquent glorification of early Indian taxation system came from M.H. Gopal in his *Mauryan Public Finance* (London, 1935). Drawing almost exclusively on the *Arthaśāstra*, Gopal compared early Indian economic ideas and institutions not only with those of the ancient world (especially Athens) but also with modern principles and practices.[39] The *Arthaśāstra* continued to inspire nationalist economic historiography even after independence, as can be seen in K.M. Saran's *Labour in Ancient India* (Bombay, 1957).[40]

The nationalist writings have regarded the ancient period of Indian history as one of considerable prosperity and general contentment. The patriotic bias of their authors has often resulted in an exaggeration of the self-sufficiency of the early Indian village out of all proportion, and a greater emphasis on the "socially productive aspects of the corporate institutions (caste included) of pre-British India" than warranted by available historical evidence.[41] By presenting an encouraging picture of the past Indian historians sought to fill the people with self-confidence which was essential to sustain the freedom struggle and viewed the British influence in India as a malevolent force that destroyed the moral and social basis of Indian life.[42] But they often tried to cover up the social inequalities characteristic of the early Indian society by vague philosophical platitudes.[43] The nationalist economic historiography, however, brought to light certain important facts such as the existence of the guild system,[44] the diversification of mechanical arts and occupations, money-lending,[45] agriculture and irrigation,[46] land system, etc.

The nationalist economic historiography stimulated interest in regional and local histories. The twenties and thirties therefore witnessed the publication of an impressive number of books and articles dealing with the various regions of the Indian subcontinent. We may first mention A.S. Altekar's *History of the Village Communities in Western India* (Bombay, 1927), which deals with the rural economy of the region in early centuries before and after the Christian era. His *Rāṣṭrakūṭas and their Times* (Poona, 1934) concentrates on political history, but it gives a chapter to industries and crafts, trade, exchange ratio of various exchange-media, prices of commodities, cost of living, etc. Sketchy in the extreme, the chapter ends with the assertion that "the people were better off than they are at present."[47] In the absence of adequate contemporary source-material, Altekar often relies on earlier *(The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea)* and later (the accounts of Al-Idrisi, Marco Polo, Ibn Batuta, etc.) sources. Particularly lacking in critical scholarship, Altekar's formulations are now generally untenable.

The real impetus to the study of economic history of the peninsular region came from the writings of K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, whose works "have created a new awareness of the history of the subcontinent by bringing the history of the south India into perspective."[48] Primarily interested in the general history of south India, he did not neglect its economic aspect. In his *Coḷas*, taxation, agriculture and land tenure, industry, trade and coinage, and weights and measures receive separate sections. Drawing largely on the Coḷa inscriptions, he describes the economic condition during the time of the Coḷa rulers, but does not pinpoint those features of the socio-economic institutions which are peculiar to the period. But Nilakanta Sastri brings to light some interesting and new pieces of evidence, and systematizes the mass of details bearing on the land tenure, industry and trade, and the economic importance of south Indian temples. He however ignores the inconvenient facts of the past. In spite of considerable evidence to the contrary he attributes to the Coḷa society "a wonderful social harmony based, not on equality of classes or individuals, but on a readiness to give and take, a mutual goodwill that had its roots deep down at the foundations of communal life."[49]

The tendency to praise the past is less pronounced in C. Minakshi's *Administration and Social Life under the Pallavas* (Madras, 1932), which gives a sketch of taxation, weights and measures, irrigation, famines and rural economic life in south India during the time of the Pallavas. Similarly, K. Gopalachari's *Early History of the Andhra Country* (Madras, 1941), surveys the towns situated on the eastern and western coasts, and the land

system, and guilds in the Andhra region in the early centuries AD. The reconstruction of economic life in early south India is far from adequate in the above-mentioned works. Principally concerned with dynastic histories, these works lack perspective in treating economic life and institutions.[50]

More detailed studies of early south Indian economic history were undertaken by K.M. Gupta *(The Land System in South India between AD 800 and AD 1200,* Lahore, 1933*),* and A. Appadorai (*Economic Conditions in Southern India, AD 1000-1500,* 2 vols., Madras, 1936). Gupta gives us the first full-length study of the agrarian system of south India in early medieval times. He treats the subject under four main divisions, the habitat, the cultivated tracts, the general waste lands and the forest tracts. His book provides some new information on land tenure and the revenue system but does not compare the south Indian land system with that of the north. On the contrary his uncritical lumping together of literary and epigraphic material from the north and the sōuth has obscured whatever regional variations may have existed. Gupta's excessive reliance on Sanskrit literary sources may be seen in his sections on landownership, which are based almost entirely on the *smṛti* literature. In this respect Appadorai's work is more balanced. It studies land tenures, agriculture and the nature of south Indian village communities, commerce, guilds, towns, industries and foreign trade from AD 1000 to AD 1500. Appadorai deals with the economic role of the state and concludes on the basis of the foreign accounts and epigraphic references that taxation may have been oppressive. His treatment is generally descriptive, and does not try to trace the evolution of south Indian economic institutions. However, he does not load his work with citations from north Indian sources and emphasizes the main features of the economic conditions of the region. He shows a general awareness of some of the basic issues of Indian historiography. The discussion throughout his book, in contrast to that in K.M. Gupta's, is orderly. During the three decades following the publication of Appadorai's *magnum opus,* interest in south Indian economic history seems to have languished. The casual and sporadic forays into the subject in the subsequent period do not add substantially to our knowledge except by providing a few pedestrian details.[51]

In the late sixties, however, detailed economic studies of the different regions of peninsular India were undertaken. K. Sundaram in his *Studies in Economic and Social Conditions of Medieval Andhra AD 1000-1600* (Machilipatnam and Madras, 1968) gives an account of metal work, jewellery, carpentry, architecture, spinning and weaving, salt manufacture,

tailoring, etc., of the artisan communities (especially the Panchala and Teliki communities), and of trade and commerce. He draws upon inscriptions, local traditions, works of Vallabhācārya, Śrīnātha and Koravi Goparāju and the accounts of Marco Polo, Abdur Razak and Nicolo Conti, but he hardly discusses their credibility. The book is a compilation of useful and fascinating details which often "float within a thin fluid of unwarranted pre-conceptions, insupportable assumptions, vague and sweeping generalizations".[52] Analysis is practically absent also in D.R. Das's *Economic History of the Deccan* (Delhi, 1969) which covers the period AD 100-600. The book is spread over fifteen chapters on geographical background, land, revenue system, agriculture, forests, famine and irrigation, towns and cities, associate life in the town and village, mineral resources, crafts and industrial arts, profession and occupation, organization of industry and trade, and banking and currency, but it does not give any idea of the elements of change and continuity. A useful compendium of economic data, it does not tackle some of the basic questions relevant to the understanding of the historical processes. It provides a list of agricultural products in the Deccan during the first six centuries of the Christian era without telling us why and how sedentary agriculture developed in the area during the post-Maurya period and not earlier. Nor does he say anything about the agricultural techniques. He discusses the general layout of towns and cities on the basis of literary and archaeological material but sees no connection between urbanization on the one hand and the growth of commerce and crafts on the other. Each aspect of the Deccan economy is studied in isolation, often on the basis of sources which may have little or no bearing on the period and area covered by Das.[53] He therefore fails to make the economic history of the Deccan meaningful. What may be said of Das's book is largely true of most of the studies of the early south Indian economy published till recently. However, the last three decades have witnessed the publication of some important studies by several scholars who have analyzed the various aspects of early medieval south Indian economy and the historical processes that shaped it. For example, Burton Stein, best known of the American scholars working on south Indian history, has examined some Coḷa and later inscriptions from Tirupati and has emphasized the role of south Indian temple in the extension of agriculture.[54] He has tried to show that the south Indian political, economic and social institutions were related to and integrated with the control of land[55] and, in his effort to provide an alternative to the traditional historiography and to the use of the concept of feudalism by D.D. Kosambi and R.S. Sharma, has postulated that the social and

economic situation in the Pallava-Coḷa-Vijayanagara period can best be understood in terms of the notion of peasant economy.[56] In contrast to Stein, the Japanese scholar N. Karashima, often working in collaboration with Y. Subbarayalu, B. Sitaraman and P. Shanmugam, has made a rigorous analysis of the Coḷa and Pāṇḍya epigraphs and has supported the perception of the Pallava-Coḷa period as one of feudal beginnings. The researches carried out by Karashima throw much light on the nature of village communities, land tenures and social stratification based on an unequal distribution of land[57] and provide a strong empirical data base for the writings of M.G.S. Narayanan, Kesavan Veluthat, Rajan Gurukkal and others who have made significant contribution to the study of feudalism which has become a point of debate among historians in recent years.[58]

A broad trend noticeable in the writings on early Indian economic history is represented by those writers who seem to have been influenced by vague socialist thinking and ideas of the materialist interpretation of history. In point of time the first historian of this group is A.N. Bose who produced a study of rural economy of north India in 600 BC-AD 200.[59] Perhaps owing to political conditions in the forties Bose does not confess his indebtedness to Marxism, but in the concluding chapter of his book he discusses class and class consciousness, class struggle and compromise. In contrast to the nationalist historians, he tries to show that all was not well with the ancient economic system and that according to the *Jātaka* stories the peasants were exploited by the princes.[60] Marxist influence is more explicit in the writings of B.N. Datta, who was associated with the terrorist movement in Bengal. As a young revolutionary living in exile he visited Moscow as early as 1921 and came in contact with the world communist movement. Datta does not confine himself to any particular phase of early Indian history as Bose does. He takes a long view of the socio-economic development throughout the ancient period. In his *Studies in Indian Social Polity* (Calcutta, 1944), which deals mainly with the origin and growth of caste, he devotes small sections to the class struggle in ancient India and to the growth of feudalism; the latter theme is assigned a separate chapter in his *Dialectics of Land-Economics in India* (Calcutta, 1952), which seeks to trace the history of the land and its tiller from the Vedic age to the end of the British rule.[61] In 1949 was published Dange's *India from Primitive Communism to Slavery*, which tried to prove the emergence of slave society in the later Vedic period on the basis of material cleverly extracted from the Vedic texts. These writers lack the thoroughness of later Marxist historians, and many of their conclusions have been contested. But their works may be treated as land-marks in the development of early economic

historiography. They made a departure from the stereotype nationalist writings and offered new and useful insights into the subject by trying to explain the early Indian economic developments in terms not peculiar to India but of universal application.

The best representatives of Marxist historiography on ancient India are D.D. Kosambi[62] and R.S. Sharma. For the former "history is the presentation in chronological order of successive changes in the means and relations of production." To him all history is basically economic history. Not surprisingly therefore he tries to explain the major historical developments on the basis of changes in the mode of production.[63] The technique followed by Kosambi is the collation of written records with archaeology and the interpretation of each of these in conjunction with ethnography.[64] This does not basically differ from the method adopted by R.S. Sharma. His writings, however, bear greater testimony of the use of linguistic and archaeological evidence.[65] As a result, unlike Kosambi's formulations which sometimes tend to become speculative, Sharma's reconstruction of the past is always rooted in the primary source material. But the impact of their methodology on Indian historical research has been rather slow; for interdisciplinary cooperation is easier recommended than achieved.

Indian historical scholarship has often been highly allergic to Marxists, who are often held guilty of blatantly forcing the historical evidence to the straightjacket framework laid down by Marx and Engels.[66] But neither Kosambi nor Sharma seems to adhere strictly to the orthodox Marxist scheme of periodization. The former, for example, emphatically asserts that ancient Indian society, unlike the Greek and the Roman, was not based on slavery,[67] though the total denial of the economic importance of slavery has been questioned by some Marxist historians, notably R.S. Sharma and Dev Raj Chanana. The *Śūdras in Ancient India*, by the former and the *Slavery in Ancient India* (Delhi, 1960), by the latter, for example, integrate the scattered evidence bearing on slavery and remain major contributions to our knowledge of the origin, extent and nature of slavery and other forms of unfreedom in ancient India.[68]

Most Indian Marxist historians including D.D. Kosambi and R.S. Sharma have challenged the orthodox Marxian notion that Asian societies remained "static and vegetative" over centuries. In fact the writings of Kosambi, Sharma and Romila Thapar[69] irrefutably show that self-sufficiency which, according to the founders of Marxism, is a characteristic feature of Asiatic societies,[70] was not possible in the strict sense of the term. For, Kosambi tells us, most Indian villages produce neither metals nor salt, the two essentials that had to be obtained by exchange. Thus although

neither Kosambi nor Sharma accepts the scheme implied in the Asiatic Mode of Production, both postulate that by the end of the Gupta period the Indian village became nearly self-sufficient owing mainly to the decline of trade and urbanism, as is evident, among other things, from the relative paucity of coinage.[71] Economic self-sufficiency of the Indian village, it has been postulated, led to the emergence of feudalism in the early medieval period—a theme on which R.S. Sharma's *Indian Feudalism*, dealing with the origin of Indian feudalism and its development under the Pālas, Pratihāras and Rāṣṭrakūṭas, remains the most comprehensive work, though several other scholars have also contributed to the literature on the subject.[72]

The appropriateness of the term "feudalism" to describe Indian situation between AD 700 and 1200 has been a matter of animated debate.[73] But this cannot minimize the Marxist historians' chief contribution which lies in their challenge to the notion of a stagnant Indian society. They have questioned the validity not only of the imperialist theory of Oriental despotism[74] but also of the Marxist model of the Asiatic Mode of Production, which, at any rate, should not be taken as crucial to the Marxist historical philosophy. For their interpretation of Indian history the Marxist historians in India, as elsewhere, have depended largely on the principles of dialectical materialism. They have therefore tried to indicate "not only the periods of change but also the nature of change" that took place through centuries. In the field of economic history this has led to a fresh study of early Indian rural economy, agrarian relations and taxation system,[75] mostly on the basis of early Indian land grants,[76] which can enable us to answer some fundamental questions relating to the changing agrarian structure and property relations, history of towns, trade,[77] arts and crafts.[78]

Judging from the historical literature produced by Marxist historians it appears that the wider application of Marxist approach to early Indian economic history has, over the years, suggested new problems, provided new categories for organizing data and has supplied hypotheses by which the data may be tested and interpreted. Since the late fifties it has also indirectly influenced research leading to a somewhat more objective evaluation of India's economic past than is available in pre-independence indigenous writings. Thus S.K. Maity *(Economic Life in Northern India in the Gupta Period*, Calcutta, 1957*)*, through a greater use of epigraphic and numismatic material than attempted ever before in north Indian economic historiography, has concluded that as regards the material life of the common people, the Gupta period was not a golden age—a point supported by another work which suggests that taxes tended to increase in

Gupta times.[79] For the subsequent period Pushpa Niyogi has found no evidence to prove that the population as a whole was prosperous.[80] Similarly L. Gopal (*Economic Life in Northern India, AD 700-1200,* Delhi, 1965) has cited some instances of semi-serfs attached to the soil; he repeatedly suggests that the common people were far from happy and economically well off, though a slightly different attitude is adopted by B.P. Mazumdar, who, in his *Socio-Economic History of Northern India AD 1030-1194* (Calcutta, 1960), tries to explain why northern India succumbed to the Turkish invaders. B.N.S. Yadava's seminal work *(Society and Culture of Northern India in the Twelfth Century,* Allahabad, 1973), based mainly on an impressive body of untapped literary texts, supports the notion of the increasing subjection of peasantry in early medieval times and fits in with R.S. Sharma's views on the growth of feudalism in early India.[81] All these works were produced in the years after independence when nationalism ceased to remain a source of inspiration and new India's problems attracted attention of their authors. Not surprisingly, they made an attempt to understand the early Indian economic life from a fresh angle. But the impact of the Marxist historiography on their writings has been at best remote; for none of them, except Yadava, shows any acquaintance with the Marxist method of analysis, though without doubt, their works contain very useful economic data, often drawn from hitherto untapped literary and epigraphic sources, and prepare the ground for a detailed analytical study of the limited chronological segments of the early economic history of north India.[82]

In sharp contrast to the West, economic historiography in India has generally remained an obstinate pocket of resistance to the use of economic theory, perhaps mainly because very few economists have taken interest in the subject. Whatever little work has been done by such economists as Pran Nath and M.H. Gopal is out of date both in terms of the questions raised and the methods adopted.[83] Following the publication of their writings considerable material has come to light, and it awaits fresh examination by historians having knowledge of economic theory which increasingly uses quantitative methods of analysis.[84] In the West the use of mathematics in social sciences is now generally accepted, though this is far from being the case in India. There has been little realization by Indian scholars of the fact that if economic history is anything it is history that asks "how much?", "what proportions?", "how representative?", etc.[85] Answers to such questions cannot be provided without a serious attempt at quantification[86] which is difficult on account of the dearth of statistical material bearing on early Indian economic history. Hard statistical data

begin to appear only towards the last quarter of the nineteenth century. In fact the general lack of evidence has been the *bête noire* of all historians working on early history. But the apparent absence of material amenable to statistical analysis should not be overemphasized. For D.D. Kosambi's study of the punch-marked coins clearly indicates the further possibility of the efficacious use of statistical inference in the analysis of the historical data on early Indian economic life. Similarly the work of Karashima *et al*, (*A Concordance of Names in the Chola Inscriptions*, 3 vols., Madras, 1978), has also demonstrated the use of quantitative methods in relation to south Indian inscriptions and is a major methodological breakthrough in analyzing the source material.

Research in early Indian economic history has been seriously inhibited by the fact that the bulk of it has been done source-wise, especially the monographs relating to the age of the Buddha. Most of the works do not rise above the level of mere inventories of disparate facts gathered from different sources mutually unrelated in their historical context. Naturally continuities and discontinuities in early Indian economy have been obscured. Of course some studies undertaken in India and abroad recognize several chronological strata in many early literary texts.[87] But their methodological implications have not been fully appreciated by some researchers who still continue to think in terms of the Epic age, the Buddhist period and so on.[88] The persistent tendency to cling oddly to the outdated ideas on Indian chronology has to be positively discouraged and combated. It will be helpful if we introduce some sense of periodization into the economic history of early India and try to mark the main stages in the economic developments from the beginning to AD 1200 on the basis of "the substantial changes in economic organization, direction and pace of activity".[89] This will require a careful use of sources such as the *Mahābhārata* whose different chapters belong to different periods. Similarly the temptation to draw heavily upon the *Arthaśāstra* will have to be resisted as also the practice of explaining developments in the twelfth century on the basis of the information available in that text.

Although epigraphic material has also been studied as a source of economic history, there has been a general unwillingness on the part of scholars to subject it to a critical scrutiny. The ever growing accessible body of land charters can now be studied in two possible ways. We may ask major questions regarding self-sufficient economy, ownership of land, rate of productivity, relation between agriculture and crafts, fragmentation or consolidation of holdings, extent of the use of money, etc. Alternatively, we may attempt a thorough analysis of the available economic data in the

land grants under well-known categories more or less on the lines of Karashima and Subbarayalu.

In our opinion the second process should precede and form the basis of the first. A detailed study would involve identification of villages granted and the fiscal units in which they were situated. It will mean an examination of the multiple-village fiscal unit introduced by the Rajputs. From an examination of land charters it may be possible to know whether there obtained the same type of village in all parts of the country, including Kerala and Assam, or whether the system differed from area to area.[90] Again, the region-wise charts of the donees prepared in a chronological order can given us an idea of the relative numerical and economic strength of the brāhmaṇas (individuals and in groups), *maṭhas*,[91] temples, vassals, civil and military officials, who were granted land. A fruitful line of inquiry may be the study of the irrigation system on the basis of inscriptions which may enable us to re-examine the theory that the main reason for the prevalence of despotic rule in Asia was the central control over irrigation.[92] Lastly, land grants may be immensely useful in investigating the feudal complex of south Indian temples and their role in the economic life of the community.

The economic studies relating to the early period of Indian history suffer from a curious neglect of the mass of available numismatic material.[93] As a result, the place of coins in the economic life of the people at a particular time and place has still to be determined.[94] The study of the coins for this purpose has not advanced beyond testing their specific gravity and analyzing their metal content.[95] But all this can be made far more useful if we are given some idea of the volume of the coins in circulation. The problem of the quantity of coins in India has not received any serious attention. A formula has been used to assess the quantity of the English coinage of the eighth to the eleventh centuries[96] and also of the medieval Islamic coinage in the Near East.[97] Although the applicability of the formula to Indian evidence has been questioned,[98] it may be possible to form a rough quantitative estimate of the coinage in circulation in a particular period and region, which will lend some reality to literary and epigraphic references to the use of coins. The frequency with which coins are used is a no less important aspect of the economic study of coins. Kosambi has attempted a statistical analysis of the punch-marked coins in this light.[99] But his method needs to be refined and pursued in relation to the other types of coins in different periods and different areas. When a coin passes through many hands in course of time it undergoes wear and tear and it loses some weight. Therefore something can be done to find out

the frequency of the use of coins to get an idea of the period of their circulation.

The area of the circulation of coins has an important economic bearing, which has to be examined in the context of the distribution of the mints.[100] Unfortunately the exact find-spots of many coin hoards deposited in Indian and foreign museums are not specified with the result that their area of circulation cannot be established. By taking into account the find-spots, where they are known, and also the time to which a given set of coins may belong, the numismatic evidence may be used fruitfully in reconstructing the economic life of the area concerned. Thus the earliest hoards of Roman coins have been found in Kerala in south India, and it seems that they have nothing to do with the trade and commerce of the Sātavāhana empire with which they are associated. Similarly, if India had trade relations with South-East Asia and China, we shall have to look for Chinese coins, and the few that are available will have to be examined. In this connection the history of gold in ancient India assumes some importance and could be taken up as an independent subject for investigation.[101] The view that whatever gold coins India had in the beginning mainly came from Rome or from Central Asia deserves further consideration; so does the theory that the Roman gold coins were used as bullion and not as regular money in India.[102] This will also lead to a re-examination of the theory that gold coins involving large transactions travel over a long distance and that copper coins meant for the use of the common people are minted and circulated locally.

The numismatic studies may very well be related to foreign trade, whose decline in late Gupta and post-Gupta times will have to be explained in the light of the comparative paucity of coins in the post-Harṣa period. Although we have several important ruling dynasties in north India between the seventh and the tenth centuries AD, none of them can be definitely credited with the issuing of any series of coins.[103] On the other hand it appears that trade and commerce, and use of coins revived in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, especially in Rajasthan and Gujarat, which also witnessed some kind of urbanization.[104] One of the tasks of the economic historian, therefore, should be to account for this revival and examine the view whether urbanization was introduced into India by the Turks. The study of coins, trade and commerce may be integrated with that of money-lending, usury, etc.[105]

Although it may not be possible to provide answer to all the questions raised above, most of them may be fruitfully studied in relation to the archaeological material, which is the most direct evidence of the material

life of the people but has been generally ignored by researchers.[106] The volume of archaeological data accumulated during the last forty years or so may be of great help in reconstructing the history of material culture, whose relevance to early economic history has yet to be fully appreciated by Indian scholars.[107] Such studies can go a long way in explaining why a particular region leaped into prominence at a particular stage and became the nucleus of an extensive empire in early India. It may also give us an idea of the formation of different ruling groups and organizations and of their roles in the diffusion of culture traits. The process of the Hinduization of primitive tribes, noted and emphasized by the writers of the nineteenth century Census Reports and subsequently conceptualized by sociologists as Sanskritization or Brahmanization, can be better understood only if we carefully examine the material outfit of the vanguard of Aryanization.

On the basis of the available archaeological evidence several questions relating to the material culture may be raised. What was the difference between the material equipment of the Ṛgvedic and that of the later Vedic people? Moreover, if the Ṛgvedic Aryans owed their success to the use of bronze weapons where are those artefacts? We have a large number of copper tools and weapons, ascribable to the first half of the second millennium BC and mostly discovered in the Kuru-Pañcāla area, which became the main centre of activity of the later Vedic Aryans from about 1000 BC. The source and technology of these artefacts and the economic implications of their use in western Uttar Pradesh will have to be explained. A more important question relates to the advent of iron in India. When, where and wherefrom did iron first appear in India? To what extent the diffusion of iron technology in north India may account for the growth of urban settlements from *c.* 600 BC, characterized by development of trade, diversification of arts and crafts, the spread of NBP deluxe ware and the earliest use of coins. Some of these questions have been tackled by R.S. Sharma,[108] but there are several other issues which need investigation. For example, although the archaeological material has been used to examine the role of iron technology and the growth of urbanism in the early historic phase, it has not been analyzed to reconstruct the process of the emergence of farming villages and village communities in the different sub-regions of the country. Recent studies in ore-artefact correlations give us some ideas of the sources of ore in metal crafts,[109] but no attempt has been made to reveal networks of exchange between communities with differential access to the source of metals. Similarly no study of the economic relationship between the early historic towns and their hinterlands has been undertaken.[110] Nor has there been much serious effort to investigate

the demographic and settlement patterns in different parts of the country.[111]

In our opinion the mass of available material may throw light not only on the habitation history of different places but also on the growth and decay of urban centres,[112] technology (especially arts and crafts, and tools and implements), and transport, whose significance needs to be adequately appreciated. It may also be of some help in forming a rough idea of the population density of the places where excavations have been conducted. The problems raised above, however, may be meaningfully studied only through the combination of literary, epigraphic, numismatic and archaeological evidence which may give new perspectives to the economic historian of ancient India, who must get rid of his usual insularity and make use of the new and often sophisticated tools of analysis.

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*The present chapter, based on a survey of writings on early Indian economic history done jointly with Professor R.S. Sharma for the Indian Council of Social Science Research, New Delhi, was first published in its original version in *JESHO*, XVII, pt. 1, 1974, and has now been revised so as to take into account some important recent writings on the subject.

[1]Fick's book in German was published from Kiel in 1897. English translation by S.K. Mitra, *The Social Organization in North-East India in Buddha's Time.*

[2]Rhys Davids, "Notes on Early Economic Conditions in North India", *JRAS*, 1901. The article was expanded into a chapter on Economic Conditions according to Early Buddhist Literature contributed by her to the *Cambridge History of India*, I.

[3]*History of British India.*

[4]For a discussion of the growth of the idea of the village community in nineteenth century British writings on India see Louis Dumont, "The Village Community from Munro to Maine", *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, no. 9, December 1966, pp. 67-89; cf. S.N. Mukherjee, "The Idea of the Village Community and the British Administrators", *Enquiry*, New Series, III, no. 3, Winter 1971, pp. 57-67.

[5]Daniel Thorner, "Marx on India and the Asiatic Mode of Production", *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, no. 9, December 1966, pp. 33-36. Also see *infra*, chapter 4.

[6]*Early History of India,* p. 128.

[7]For a summary of views on landownership see E.W. Hopkins, *India Old and New*, pp. 206-29.

[8]"Roman Trade with India : A Resurvey" in P.R. Coleman-Norton, ed., *Studies in Roman Economic and Social History in Honour of Allan Chester Johnson.*

[9]G.L. Adhya, *Early Indian Economics*, chapter III; cf. C. Margabandhu, "Trade Contacts between Western India and the Graeco-Roman World in the Early Centuries of the Christian Era : An Archaeological Restatement", *JESHO*, VIII, 1965; *idem*, *Archaeology of the Satavahana-Kshatrapa Times*. The two works on India's early trade, H.P. Chakraborty, *Trade and Commerce of Ancient India*, 200 BC-AD 650 and Balaram Shrivastava, *Trade and Commerce in Ancient Times*, which appeared in the sixties, are mere compilations of the more or less already known data not assimilated into any analytical framework.

[10]*ISIH*, chapter 8.

[11]H.P. Ray, *Monastery and Guild*, p. 207.

[12]Kenneth R. Hall, *Trade and Statecraft in the Age of Colas*, New Delhi, 1980; B.D. Chattopadhyaya, "Markets and Merchants in Early Medieval Rajasthan", *Social Science Probings*, II, 1985, pp. 203-19; Xinru Liu, *Ancient India and Ancient China*; V.K. Jain, *Trade and Traders in Western India (AD 1000-1300)*; cf. Chitrarekha Gupta, "Horse Trade in North India: Some Reflections on Socio-Economic Life", *Journal of Ancient Indian History*, XIV, pts. 1-2, 1983-84, pp. 186-206.

[13]There appeared in 1911 two books relating to the subject. They are: N.S. Subba Rao, *Economic and Political Conditions in Ancient India;* C.P. Venkatarama Ayyar, *Town Planning in Ancient Deccan.*

[14]The technological and organizational aspects of shipbuilding in early India has also been discussed by L. Gopal, "Art of Shipbuilding and Navigation in Ancient India", *JIH*, XL, 1962, pp. 313-27; cf. A.L. Basham, "Notes on Seafaring in Ancient India", *Studies in Indian History and Culture*, pp. 146-66; Md. Aquique, "Shipbuilding Industry in Ancient India", *JBRS*, LXI, pp. 31-36.

[15]The notion of India's other-worldliness was best expressed by Max Müller (*A History of Sanskrit Literature*, p. 3), though it was popular even before him and suited the interests of the British ruling class. It has been rightly suggested that the historiographical stereotype of India's other-worldliness has also conditioned much of the debate on economic under-development of this country (Romila Thapar, *The Past and Prejudice*, pp. 20-21). For example, Vikas Mishra, *Hinduism and Economic Growth*; William Kapp, *Hindu Culture, Economic Development and Economic Planning in India*; Thomas W. Shea, Jr., "The Economic Development in Traditional Societies: Malabar, A Case Study", *Journal of Economic History*, XIX, 1954, pp. 504-22; Gunnar Myrdal, *Asian Drama : An Inquiry into the Poverty of Nations;* A. Maddison, *Class Structure and Economic Growth : India and Pakistan Since the Mughals.*

[16]*South Indian Guilds.* Since the thirties the problem of craft and merchant guilds has attracted the attention of several scholars, especially K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *The Colas*; A. Appadorai, *Economic Conditions in Southern India*, 2 vols; S.K. Maity, *Economic Life in Northern India in the Gupta Period*; K. Sundram, *Studies in Economic and Social Conditions in Medieval Andhra AD 1000-1600*; Dipak Ranjan Das, *Economic History of the Deccan*; Jaimal Rai, *The Rural-Urban*

Economy and Social Changes in Ancient India 300 BC-AD 600; Kenneth Hall, op. cit., H.P. Ray, op. cit. and V.K. Jain, op. cit.

[17]R.S. Vaidyanath Ayyar studied the agrarian and commercial problems on the basis of Manu (*Manu's Land and Trade Laws).* In 1926 Balkrishna wrote his article: "Interest and Usury", *Sir Asutosh Memorial Volume.*

[18]*Economic Conditions of Ancient India.*

[19]*Economic Life in Ancient India.*

[20]*Economic Life and Progress in Ancient India,* I.

[21]*Economic History of Ancient India..*

[22]*A Study in the Economic Condition of Ancient India.*

[23]Op. cit., preface, p. v.

[24]Samaddar believed that "a real regeneration, civilization and advancement of India, materially, morally and politically, depends upon the long continuance of the British rule" (op. cit., p. 160). Pran Nath did not, however, suffer from the pro-British bias and compared the economic conditions of India with those obtaining in feudal Europe and devoted separate sections to the landowning classes, the labouring classes, taxes, impositions, etc. (op. cit.).

[25]Bandhyopadhyaya, op. cit., pp. 276-7; Buch, op. cit., pp. 192-3. The post-independence period has seen the publication of research studies by several scholars who do not share nationalist perception of India's economic past and we shall refer to them at appropriate places. But special mention may be made here of Jaimal Rai, *The Rural-Urban Economy and Social Changes in India 300 BC-AD 600,* who, unlike other scholars, has surveyed the economic scene of ancient India during a longer period and has been generally free from any nationalist bias.

[26]Many inscriptions appeared in such periodicals as the *Asiatic Researches* and the *Journal of the Asiatic Society* (both published by the Asiatic Society, Calcutta), the *Indian Antiquary* (started by Burgess in 1872) and various other publications.

[27]For progress of epigraphic studies see D.C. Sircar, *Indian Epigraphy,* pp. 8-10.

[28]R.S. Sharma, *Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions in Ancient India,* ch. I; Romila Thapar, "Interpretations of Ancient Indian History", *History and Theory,* VII, no. 3, 1968, p. 326; also in *Ancient Indian Social History.*

[29]"Was State-Socialism known in Ancient India? (A Study in Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra*)," *Sir Asutosh Mookerjee Silver Jubilee Volume,* III, pt. I, pp. 429-46; *idem,* "Economic Policy and Functions of the Kautilyan State", *Journal of the Department of Letters,* Calcutta University, XIII, 1926, pp. 1-30.

[30]*Aspects of Ancient Indian Thought.*

[31]Ibid., p. 149.

[32]Ibid., p. 152.

[33]*Hindu Revenue System,* pp. 273-9.

[34]Ibid., p. 17.

[35]Ibid., p. 278.

[36]*The Agrarian System in Ancient India,* p. 80.

[37]Ibid., p. 89.

[38]Ibid., pp. 98-99.

[39]Gopal, op. cit., p. 15.

[40]Articles on specific aspects of the *Arthaśāstra* economy have continued to appear in various journals. See H.N. Pathak, "Some Economic concepts in Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra*", *Proceedings of the All-India Oriental Conference*, 17th Session, 1953, pp. 401-08; G. Harihara Sastri, "Salaries and Allowances in the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya", *Journal of Oriental Research*, Madras, XVII, 1958-59, pp. 11-26. A study exclusively devoted to the economic content of the *Arthaśāstra* is B.C. Sen, *Economics in Kauṭilya*, 1969; cf., B.P. Sinha, *Readings in Kauṭilya's Arthaśāstra*. For an assessment of the impact of the *Arthaśāstra* on Indian historical research see Johnnes H. Voigt, "Nationalist Interpretations of *Arthaśāstra* in Indian Historical Writing" in S.N. Mukherjee, ed., *South Asian Affairs Number Two* (St. Anthony's Papers no. 18), pp. 46-66.

[41]Morris D. Morris & Burton Stein, "The Economic History of India: A Bibliographic Essay", *Journal of Economic History*, XXI, 1961, p. 182.

[42]Illustrations of this argument may be found in B.D. Basu, *The Rise of Christian Power in India* and *Ruin of Indian Trade and Industries*.

[43]R. Shamasastry, "Economic Philosophy of the Ancient Indians", *ABROI*, XII, 1930-31, pp. 25-39; N.G. Kalelkar, "Distribution of Wealth in Ancient India", *Proceedings of the All-India Oriental Conference*, 7th Session, 1933, pp. 279-90; R.K. Mukherjee, "The Economic History of India", *Journal of the U.P. Historical Society*, XIV, pt. 2, 1941, pp. 91-96; Motichand, "Rationing and other Famine Relief Measures in Ancient India", ibid., XVII, pts. 1-2, 1945, pp. 18-30.

[44]Most of the books on early Indian economic history written in the twenties and thirties give considerable space to the study of ancient Indian guild system. See *supra*, fn. 16.

[45]Two important studies of early Indian banking and usury are: Brijkishore Bhargava, *Indigenous Banking in Medieval India*; and Principal Balkrishna, "Interest and Usury", *Sir Asutosh Memorial Volume*, Patna, 1926.

[46]This aspect of early Indian economic life came to occupy an important place in most general works produced by Indian historians during the period of the freedom struggle. But it also formed an independent theme of several economic studies, e.g., V. Venkayya, "Irrigation in Southern India", *Archaeological Survey of India : Report 1903-04*; R. Ganguli, "Cattle and Cattle Rearing in Ancient India", *ABORI*, XII, 1931, pp. 216-30; *idem*, *Agriculture and Agriculturists in Ancient India*; S.P. Raychoudhuri, *A Short Account of Agricultural Methods Practised in Ancient India*; A.K.Y. Narayan Aiyer, *Agriculture and Allied Arts in Vedic India*. For a treatment of the early Indian agriculture by Indian scholars in post-independence period see D.M. Bose, S.N. Sen and B.V. Subbarayappa, eds., *A Concise History of Science in India*, pp. 350-70; Lallanji Gopal, *Aspects of History of Agriculture in India;* M.S. Randhawa, *A History of Agriculture in India*, I. More recently Gyula Wojtilla, a Hungarian scholar, has published several studies of

agriculture in the early medieval period. See his articles: "Kāśyapīyakṛsisūkti: A Sanskrit Work of Agriculture", *Acta Orientalia*, XXXIII, pt. 2, 1979, pp. 209-52, XXXIX, pt. 1, 1985, pp. 85-136; "Rural Expansion in Early Medieval India: A Linguistic Assessment" (mimeographed).

[47]Altekar, *The Rāṣṭrakūṭas and Their Times*, p. 398.

[48]*The Pāṇḍyan Kingdom*; *The Coḷas*; *Historical Method in Relation to Problems of South Indian History*; *The Culture and History of the Tamils*; *Cultural Contacts between Aryans and Dravidians*.

[49]*The Coḷas*, p. 542.

[50]This also applies to the relevant sections in the various works on different regions and ruling dynasties of India. See, for example, M. Arokiaswami, *The Kongu Country*; P. Bhatia, *The Paramāras*; J.D.M. Derrett, *The Hoysaḷas*; B.N. Puri, *The History of the Gurjara-Pratihāras*; *idem*, *India under the Kushanas*; D. Sharma, *Early Chauhan Dynasties*; K.J. Virji, *Ancient History of Saurashtra*.

[51]Kumuda Ranjan Chatterjee, "Temple Offerings and Temple Servants in South India", *PIHC*, Fourth Session, 1940, pp. 156-68; M. Venkateswarlu, "Land Grants in Medieval Andhra", *JAHRS*, XX, 1949, pp. 12-16; K.V. Soundara Rajan, "The Kaleidoscopic Activities of Medieval Temples in Tamilnad", *Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society*, XLII, no. 3, 1952, pp. 87-101; V. Krishnamurty, "Temple Endowments in Medieval Andhra", *JAHRS*, XXVI, 1960-61, pp. 113-69; J.D.M. Derrett, "*Kutta*, a class of land tenure in South India", *BSOAS*, XXI, 1958, pp. 61-81.

[52]*JAS*, XXVIII, 1968, p. 637.

[53]The chapter on forests rests primarily on the *Rāmāyaṇa*: and materials from the *Jātaka* stories and the commentaries of Vijñāneśvara (eleventh century), Aparārka (twelfth century) and Kullūka (thirteenth century) have also been used without discussing their possible applicability to the region and the period studied.

[54]Burton Stein, "The Economic Functions of a South Indian Temple", *JAS*, XIX, 1959, pp. 163-79.

[55]Burton Stein, "Integration of the Agrarian System in South India" in R. Frykenberg, ed., *Land Control and Social Structure in Indian History*, pp. 175-216.

[56]Burton Stein, "The State and the Agrarian Order in Medieval South India: A Historical Critique" in Stein, ed., *Essays on South India*; *idem*, *The Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India*, New Delhi, 1980. For a critique of this work see *infra*, chapter VII. Stein's writings have influenced other American scholars working on south Indian history. See, for example, Kenneth Hall, op. cit.; G. Spencer, "Religious Networks and Royal Influence in Eleventh Century South India", *JESHO*, XII, no. 1, 1969; *idem*, "The Politics of Plunder: The Cholas in Eleventh Century Ceylon", *JAS*, XXXV, 1976, pp. 405-19; *idem*, *The Politics of Expansion: The Chola Conquest of Sri Lanka and Sri Vijaya*.

[57]N. Karashima, *South Indian History and Society: Studies from Inscriptions AD 800-1800*, a collection of articles, deals with various aspects of agrarian system and is a work of considerable methodological significance. Also see Y. Subbara-

yalu, "The Place of Ūr in the Economic and Social History of Early Tamil Nadu", paper presented at the ICHR seminar on Problems of Economic and Social History of India, Madras University, 1977; *idem*, "The Peasantry of the Tiruchirapalli District from the 13th to 17th Century", *Studies in Socio-Cultural Change in Rural Villages in Tiruchirapalli District, Tamil Nadu, India*; *idem*, "The Sale Deeds in Early Medieval Tamil Nadu" (mimeographed).

[58]M.G.S. Narayanan, *Cultural Symbiosis in Kerala*; *idem*, *Re-interpretations in South Indian History*; *idem*, "Recent Work and Research Problems in Social and Economic History of Ancient and Medieval South India", paper presented at the UGC seminar on Historiography, Calicut, 1977; *idem*, "Historiography: Trends and Prospects", Presidential Address, Section I, Indian History Congress, Hyderabad, 1978; *idem*, "Socio-economic implications of the Concept of Mahapataka in the Feudal Society of South India", *PIHC*, 37th session, Calicut, 1976; *idem*, "New Trends: A Case Study of the Chola Times", Presidential Address, South Indian History Congress, Mysore, 1985; Kesavan Veluthat, "Temples in South India", a paper presented at the symposium on the Role of Religious Institutions in India, Indian History Congress, 42nd session, Bodh-Gaya, 1981; *idem, Brahmana Settlements in Kerala*; *idem*, "The Power Structure of Monarchy in South India (A.D 600-1300)", Ph.D. thesis, Calicut University, 1987; Rajan Gurukkal, "The Socio-Economic Role of Temples in Medieval Kerala", M.Phil. dissertation, Jawaharlal Nehru University, 1977; *idem*, "The Socio-economic Milieu of the Kerala Temple: A Functional Analysis", *Studies in History*, II, no. 1, 1980; *idem*, "The Agrarian System and Socio-Political Organisation under the Early Pandyas AD 600-1000", Ph.D. thesis, Jawaharlal Nehru University, 1984; R.N. Nandi's "Agrarian Growth and Social Conflicts in Early India" in D.N. Jha, ed., *Feudal Social Formation in Early India*, has examined the evidence from Karnataka; cf. Sister M. Liceria, "Social and Economic History of Karnataka AD 1000-1300", Ph. D. thesis, Patna University, 1972.

[59]*Social and Rural Economy of Northern India c. 600 BC-AD 200*, 2 vols.

[60]It may be pointed out that one of the first Indian scholars to openly plead for the application of Marxism to Indian history was D.P. Mukherji (*On Indian History: A Study in Method*, pp. 8-48).

[61]A critical assessment of B.N. Datta's historical writings has recently been attempted by Amal Chattopadhyay, "Dr. Bhupendranath Datta and His Study of Indian Society." Ph.D. thesis, University of Burdwan, 1988.

[62]The two books written by D.D. Kosambi are: *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History*, which surveys the course of Indian history from the earliest times till the British conquest, and *Culture and Civilisation of Ancient India in Historical Outline*, which deals with topics ranging from prehistory to the long process of emergent feudalism. These books sum up the results of Kosambi's historical inquiries published in various journals in the fifties and sixties.

[63]"The Basis of Indian History", *JAOS*, LXXV, 1955, pp. 35-45, pp. 226-37.

[64]"Combined Methods in Indology", *Indo-Iranian Journal*, VI, 1963, pp. 177-202. Also see *infra*, chapter 2.

[65]R.S. Sharma, "Reconstruction of Ancient Indian History", *ABORI*, LV, 1974, pp. 1-8.

[66]This is specially true of Dange, *India From Primitive Communism to Slavery* and S.A.Q. Hussaini, *Economic History of India*, I. For criticism of Dange see Kosambi, "Marxism and Ancient Indian Culture", *ABORI*, XXIX, 1949, pp. 271-7.

[67]*CCAIHO*, p. 23. For a detailed critique of this work see *infra*, chapter 2.

[68]Devraj Chanana, "Ideological Aspects of Slavery in Ancient India", *Journal of the Oriental Institute*, VIII, 1959, pp. 389-98; cf. Walter Ruben, ed., *Die Okonomische and soziale Entwicklung Indiens*. A number of articles on early Indian slavery have appeared in various publications: U.N. Ghoshal, "Slavery in Ancient India—A Study in India's Social and Economic History" in *The Beginnings of Indian Historiography and Other Essays*, pp. 85-103; B.C. Law, "Slavery as known to Early Buddhists", *Journal of the Ganganath Jha Research Institute*, VI, 1948, pp. 1-10; R.C. Agrawala, "Position of Slaves and Serfs as depicted in the Kharosthi Documents from Chinese Turkestan", *IHQ*, XXIX, 1953, pp. 97-110; L. Gopal, "Slavery in Ancient India", *JAHRS*, XXVII, 1961, pp. 70-89.

[69]Like Kosambi and Sharma, Romila Thapar also subscribes to the view that Indian society has undergone changes over centuries. See Thapar, *Ancient Indian Social History*.

[70]See *infra*, chapter 4.

[71]R.S. Sharma, *IF; idem*, *Urban Decay in India* (*c. 300-c. 1000*).

[72]R.K. Choudhary, "Some Historical Aspects of Feudalism in Ancient India", *JIH*, XXXVII, 1959, pp. 305-6; ibid., XXXVIII, 1960, 103ff., *idem*, "Theory of Commendation and Subinfeudation in Ancient India", *PIHC*, 30th Session, Bhagalpur, 1962, pp. 115-20; K.K. Gopal, "Feudal Composition of Army in Early Medieval India", *JAHRS*, XXVIII, 1962-3, pp. 30-99; *idem*, "The Assembly of the *Samantas* in Early Medieval India", *JIH*, XLII, 1964, pp. 241-50; L. Gopal, "Ownership of Agricultural Land in Ancient India", *JBRS*, XLVI, 1960, pp. 27-44; *idem*, "On Some Problems of Feudalism in Ancient India", *ABORI*, XLVI, 1963, pp. 1-32; *idem*, "*Samanta*: Its varying significance in Ancient India", *JRAS*, pts. I-II, 1963, pp. 21-37; *idem*, "On Feudal Polity in Ancient India", *JIH*, XLI, 1963, pp. 405-13; *idem*, "Quasi-Manorial Rights in Ancient India", *JESHO*, VI, pt. 3, 1963, pp. 296-308; D. Sharma, "Some Light on Feudal Elements in Indian Polity (AD 770-1000)", *PIHC*, 24th Session, Delhi, 1961, pp. 79-82. Some of the important Soviet writings on the subjects are as follows: L.B. Alaev, *Yuznaya Indiya sotsial noekonomicheskaya istoria XIV-XXVII vekov;* K.A. Antanova, "K Voprosu O. Razvitii Feodalizma v Indii", *Kratkie Sooleschenia Instituta Vostokovedeniya*, III, pp. 23-32; K.Z. Ashrafyan, "Some Problems of Feudalism in India", paper presented at the XVIII International Congress of Orientalists, Canberra, 6-12 January 1971; Y.M. Medvedev, "K Voprosu O Formakh Jemlevladeniya V Severnoi Indii V VI-VII Vekakh", *Problemi vostokovideniya*, I, 1959, pp. 44-61; *idem*, "Origin and Evolution of the Form of Indian Grants" in W.

Ruben, V. Struve and G. Bongard-Levin, eds., *Historiyi drevnei Indii*. Special mention may be made of B.N.S. Yadava, *SCNI*; *idem*, "The Problem of the Emergence of Feudal Relations in Early India", Presidential Address, Section I, Indian History Congress, 41st Session, Bombay, 1980. Also see *supra*, fn. 58.

[73]A.K. Warder in *JESHO*, II, 1959, pp. 217; D.C. Sircar, ed., *Land System and Feudalism in Ancient India*; J. W. Spellman in *AHR*, LXXII, 1967, p. 673; Burton Stein in *JAS*, XXVI, 1967, p. 154; D.C. Sircar, *Landlordism and Tenancy in Ancient India As Revealed by Epigraphical Records*; Buddha Prakash, "The Genesis and Character of Landed Aristocracy in Ancient India", *JESHO*, IX, 1971, pp. 196-220; Harbans Mukhia, "Was There Feudalism in Indian History?", Presidential Address, Section II, Indian History Congress, 40th Session, Waltair, 1979 (also published in *JPS*, VIII, no. 3, April 1981); T.J. Byres and Harbans Mukhia, eds., *Feudalism and Non-European Societies*, special issue, *JPS*, XII, nos. 2-3, 1985; Om Prakash, *Early Indian Landgrants and State Economy;* cf. Ali R. Rizvi, "Feudalism Debate", *Seminar*, no. 338, October 1987, pp. 41-4. V.K. Thakur, *Historiography of Indian Feudalism*. For a fuller discussion see *infra*, chapter 4.

[74]D.D. Kosambi, "The Basis of Despotism", *Economic Weekly*, IX, 12 November 1957, pp. 1417-9; Irfan Habib, "An Examination of Wittfogel's Theory of Oriental Despotism", *Enquiry*, no. 6, pp. 54-73; R.S. Sharma, "The Socio-Economic Bases of Oriental Despotism in Early India", paper presented at the Seminar on Monarchy and Government-Traditions and Ideologies,30th International Congress of Human Sciences in Asia and North Africa, Mexico, 3-8 August 1975, cf. R.A.L. Gunawardana, "The Analysis of Pre-Colonial Social Formation in Asia in the Writings of Karl Marx", *IHR*, II, no. 2, 1976, pp. 365-88.

[75]R.S. Sharma, "A Survey of Land System in India from *c.* 200 BC to AD 650", *JBRS*, XLIV, 1958, pp. 225-34; *idem*, *IF*; D.N. Jha, *Revenue System in Post-Maurya and Gupta Times*; B.N.S. Yadava, *SCNI*, chapter 2; Jaimal Rai, op. cit.; Toshio Yamazaki, "Some Aspects of Land Sale Inscriptions in Fifth and Sixth Century Bengal", *Acta Asiatica*, no. 42, 1982, pp. 17-36; Saroj Sharma, "Land System in Northern India c. AD 400-700", Ph.D. thesis, Delhi University, 1988; K.M. Shrimali, *Agrarian Structure in Central India and the Northern Deccan*; P. Shanmugam, *The Revenue System of the Cholas, 850-1279*; R. Tirumalai, *Land Grants and Agrarian Reactions in Coḷa and Pāṇḍya Times*; B.D. Chattopadhyaya, *Aspects of Rural Settlements and Rural Society in Early Medieval India*.

[76]R.S. Sharma, "Land Grants and Early Indian Economic History" in B.N. Ganguli, ed., *Readings in Indian Economic History*; *idem*, "An Analysis of Land Grants and their Value for Economic History", in *Perspectives in Social and Economic History of Early India*.

[77]B.D. Chattopadhyaya, "Trade and Urban Centres in Early Medieval India", *IHR*, I, 1974, pp. 203-19; *idem*, "Markets and Merchants in Early Medieval Rajasthan", *Social Science Probings*, II, 1985, pp. 413-40; idem, "Urban Centres in Early Medieval India: An Overview" in S. Bhattacharya and Romila Thapar, eds, *Situating Indian History for Sarvepalli Gopal*, Delhi, 1986; A. Ghosh, *City in*

Early Historical India; M.R. Tarafdar, "Trade and Society in Early Medieval Bengal", *IHR*, IV, 1978, pp. 274-86; B.P. Mazumdar, "Industries and Internal Trade in Early Medieval North India", *JBRS*, XLV-XLVI, pts. 1-4, 1979-80, pp. 230-55; V.K. Thakur, *Urbanisation in Ancient India*; Kameshwar Prasad, *Cities, Crafts and Commerce under the Kusanas*; H. Sarkar, "Growth of Cities in Andhradesa", Presidential Address, Andhra Pradesh History Congress, 10th session, Guntur, 1986; R.S. Sharma, *Urban Decay in India (c. 300-c. 1000)*; *idem*, "Iron and Urbanization in the Ganga Basin", *IHR*, I, 1974; George Erdosy, *Urbanisation in Early Historic India;* Om Prakash Prasad, *Decay and Revival of Urban Centres in Early Medieval South India (c. AD 600-1200)*; V.K. Jain, op. cit.

[78]M.G. Dikshit, *History of Indian Glass*; Mamata Choudhury, "The Techniques of Colouring Glass and Ceramic Materials in Ancient and Medieval India", *Indian Journal of History of Science*, V, no. 2, 1970; Rajeshwar Prasad Singh, "Artisans in Manu", *PIHC*, 32nd Session, Jabalpur, 1970; H. Chakraborti, "Textile Industry in India", *JIH*, Golden Jubilee Volume, 1973; V.P. Dwivedi, *Indian Ivories*; V. Jha, "Leather Workers in Ancient and Early Medieval India", *PIHC*, 40th session, Waltair, 1979.

[79]D.N. Jha, *Revenue System in Post-Maurya and Gupta Times.*

[80]Pushpa Niyogi, *Contributions to the Economic History of Northern India from the Tenth to the Twelfth Century AD.*

[81]Also see B.N.S. Yadava, "The Accounts of Kali Age and the Social Transition from the Antiquity to the Middle Ages", *IHR*, V, nos. 1 & 2, July 1978-January 1979; *idem*, "The Problem of the Emergence of Feudal Relations in Early India", op. cit.

[82]It has been pointed out that emphasis on the early economic history of north India has stemmed "from the historiographical traditions which (along with canons of modern historical scholarship) the Indian historian has inherited from his European predecessor, traditions which emphasized scholarship and research in the venerable Sanskrit law books and commentaries on north Indian Society". Areas such as south India and parts of central and western India, being marginal to the centre of Sanskritic tradition, have been neglected (Moris and Stein, op. cit., p. 183). But this applies to all types of studies, and perhaps may be explained by the size and general importance of north India.

[83]Pran Nath (op. cit.) deals, among other things, with the rate of interest, prices, population and the cost of living. But he does not go beyond literary and epigraphic references under various categories. Whatever analysis may be seen in his work (especially in the chapters on territorial divisions and population in ancient India) does not inspire much confidence. M.H. Gopal's work (op. cit.) is an example of the abuse of modern theories of taxation and public finance to suit nationalist sentiments. Rangasvami Aiyangar, who was not an economist, has merely compiled literary references under such well known rubrics of classical economics as production, consumption, exchange and distribution, and public finance (op. cit.).

[84]In England the application of theoretical principles of economics to economic

history seems to have become fairly common (*Research in Economic and Social History: A Social Science Council Review*, pp. 25-32), though quantitative history is not as popular in the UK as in USA. For a discussion of comparative unpopularity of quantitative techniques in England see Donald N. McCloskey, ed., *Essays on a Mature Economy: Britain After 1840*, pp. 401-39. David Thomson has described the nature of relationship that should develop between economics and economic theory: "...economics and history may enter into a working partnership but never into marriage. They can aid one another, they can suggest techniques, insights, modes of approach to fuller understanding. But they cannot usefully merge... Economic history is not just a hybrid of economics and history... it is the main area of overlap in their (economists and historians) activities, an area of common interest and mutual aid" (*The Aims of History*, pp. 75-6).

[85]Morris D. Morris, "The Economist As Economic Historian", paper submitted to the Seminar on Social and Economic History of India, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla, 1966.

[86]Many years ago the French historian Georges Lefebvre stated in his famous dictum: *Pour faire de l'histoire, il faut savoir compter* (to write history, one must know how to count, cited in David Thomson, op. cit., p. 84). But subsequently several scholars have sought to make a well-reasoned case for the use of economic theory and statistics in the writing of economic history. E.g., Alfred H. Conrad and John R. Mayer, *Studies in Econometric History*, pp. 3-40; Richard Stone, *Mathematics in the Social Sciences and Other Essays*, pp. 1-18. For actual examples of the application of statistical method to specific historical themes in the West see D.K. Rowney and J.W. Graham, eds., *Quantitative History;* cf., J.H. Dexter, "History, the Social Sciences, and Quantification", paper presented at the XIII International Congress of Historical Sciences, Moscow, 1970.

[87]R.C. Hazra, *Studies in Puranic Records on Hindu Rites and Customs;* B.B. Mishra, *Polity in the Agni Purāṇa*; D.D. Kosambi, "The Text of the Arthaśāstra", *JAOS*, XXVIII, 1958, pp. 169-73; *idem*, "The Line of Arthaśāstra Teachers", *IHR*, V, nos. 1-2, July 1978-January 1979, pp. 1-15; Thomas R. Trautmann, "A Metrical Origin for the Kauṭīlīya *Arthaśāstra*", ibid., LXXXVIII, 1968, pp. 347-9. On the basis of a statistical analysis of the vocabulary of the *Arthaśāstra* text, Trautmann (*Kauṭilya and the Arthaśāstra : A Statistical Investigation into the Authorship and Evolution of the Text*) thinks that is different parts have different dates, though these are probably not widely separated. Also see R.P. Kangle, "Some Recent Work on the Kauṭīlīya *Arthaśāstra*", *JBBRAS*, New Series, XLIII-XLIV, 1968-69, pp. 227-38; Suresh Chandra Mishra, "An Inscriptional Approach to the Study of the Arthaśāstra of Kauṭilya", Ph.D. thesis, Delhi University, 1984. The Poona critical edition of the *Mahābhārata* draws attention to the question of stratification which has also been discussed by R.S. Sharma, *Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions*, chaper I. Similarly J.L. Brockington, *Righteous Rāma*, discusses the stages in the evolution of the *Rāmāyaṇa*.

[88]P.C. Jain, *Labour in Ancient India*; D.R. Chanana, "Agriculture in the

Gangetic Valley", *Contributions to Indian Economic History,* II, pp. 101-18, makes a departure from the usual approach and recongizes various stages of economic development in the *Rāmāyaṇa.*

[89]Morris D. Morris & Burton Stein, op. cit., p. 180. R.S. Sharma made a beginning in this direction ("Stages in Early Indian Economy", *Light on Early Indian Society and Economy,* pp. 52-80), but he has not integrated the south Indian evidence into his scheme. Here it must be emphasized that "periodization for India as a whole is impossible, except with the broadest margins"—D.D. Kosambi, "On a Marxist Approach to Indian Chronology", *ABORI,* XXXI, 1950, pp. 258-9.; cf., *idem,* "Stages of the Indian History", *Journal of the Indo-Soviet Cultural Society,* I, 1954, pp. 40-55. During the last three decades or so there has been a greater awareness of the problem of periodization as can be inferred from the following writings: D.N. Jha, "Problems of Periodization in Early Indian Economic History", paper read at the Seminar on Periodization in Indian History, Department of History, Patna University, 1968; R.K. Choudhary, "Stages in Ancient Indian Political History", *Enquiry,* New Series, III, no. 1, Spring 1969, pp. 28-49; Barun De, "Encapsulation as An Alternative to the Difficulties of Periodizing Indian History" in S.C. Malik, ed., *The Indian Civilization: The First Phase;* B.D. Chattopadhyaya, "The Chronological and Geographical Scope", ibid., pp. 93-97; B.N. Mukherjee, "On Periodization", ibid., pp. 98-9; P.B. Desai, "Chronological Limits for South India", ibid., pp. 104-5; R.V. Oturkar, "Medieval Period of Indian History, its Duration, Nature and Content" in V.D. Rao, ed., *Studies in Indian History: A.G. Pawar Felicitation Volume,* pp. 41-6; R.S. Sharma, "Problem of Translation from Ancient to Medieval in Indian History", *IHR,* I, no. 1, 1974, pp. 1-9.

[90]Only a few works can be cited on the early Indian village: H. Baden-Powell, *The Indian Village Community;* A.S. Altekar, *A History of Village Communities in Western India;* Radha Kamal Mukherjee, "Origins of Indian Village System", *Indian Inheritance,* II; Abhay Kant Chaudhuri, *Early Medieval Village in North-Eastern India;* B.D. Chattopadhyaya, *Aspects of Rural Settlements and Rural Society in Early Medieval India.*

[91]Pushpa Niyogi, *Brahmanic Settlements in Different Subdivisions of Ancient Bengal,* is a case in point. Similar area-wise studies have been undertaken in recent years. E.g., Kesavan Veluthat, *"Brahman Settlements in Kerala;* M. Santisri, *Brahmanical Settlements in Andhra Pradesh",* M.Phil. dissertation, Jawaharlal Nehru University, 1980; Snehlata Anand, *Brahmanical Settlements in Gujarat and Rajasthan,* Ph.D. thesis, Delhi University, 1985.

[92]A reappraisal of the theory of Oriental despotism in relation to Sri Lanka has been attempted by E.R. Leach, "Hydraulic Society in Ceylon", *Past and Present,* no. 15, 1959, pp. 2-25 and R.A.L.H. Gunawardana, "Irrigation and Hydraulic Society in Early Medieval Ceylon", ibid., no. 53, 1971, pp. 3-27; *idem,* "Total Power or Shared Power? A Study of the Hydraulic State and its Transformation in Sri Lanka from the Third to the Ninth Century AD", *IHR,* II, nos. 1-2, July 1980-

January 1981, pp. 70-98. R.S. Sharma has brought about considerable material to bear upon the irrigation system of the post-Maurya period (*Perspectives in Social and Economic History of Early India)* and B.D. Chattopadhyaya has reconstructed the irrigation history of early medieval Rajasthan ("Irrigation in Early Medieval Rajasthan", *JESHO*, XVI, pts 2-3, 1973). Neither of them has, however, discussed the theoretical implications of the relevant evidence.

[93]For a recent survey of numismatic studies see K.M. Shrimali, "Early Indian Coins and Economic History: Trends and Prospects" in Devendra Handa, ed., *Ajaya-Śrī* (Ajaya Mitra Shastri Felicitation Volume), I, pp. 237-51.

[94]For a discussion of the relevance of coins to the subject see R.S. Sharma, "Coins and Problems of Ealry Indian Economic History", *JNSI*, XXXI, 1969, pp. 1-8· also in *Perspectives in Social and Economic History of Early India*, pp. 184-92.

[95]For example see K.T.M. Hegde, "Chemical and Speedometric Studies in the Kṣatrapa Coins", *JNSI*, XXIV, pt 1, 1967; *idem*, "Analytical Study of Paunar Coins", ibid., XXXVII, pts. 1-2, 1975; S. Saran, "Technical Study of Gupta Silver Coins", ibid., XLVII, 1985. MacDowall, however, has used the metrological analysis and frequency tables of the Kuṣāṇa gold and copper coins to show the interaction between them and Roman coins as well as to establish a linkage between the weight standards of the gold and silver currency of the Kuṣāṇas ("The Weight Standards of the Gold and Copper Coinages of the Kuṣāṇa Dynasty from Vima Kadphises to Vāsudeva", *JNSI*, XXII, 1960, pp. 63-74). Among the works which make a departure from the traditional antiquarian numismatics obsessed with typology and ascription of coins, mention may be made of the following: B.D. Chattopadhyaya, *Coins and Currency Systems in South India c. AD 225-1300*; B.N. Mukherjee, *Kuṣāṇa Silver Coinage*; K.M. Shrimali, *History of Pañcāla;* O.P. Singh, *Economic Gleaning from Early Indian Coins*, Delhi, 1985; A.M. Shastri, "Indo-Roman Trade and Currency Systems of Western India", in Satyavrat Shastri, ed., *Manjushā* (S.R. Rao, 60th Birthday Felicitation Volume).

[96]D.M. Metcalf, "How Large was the Anglo-Saxon Currency ?", *Economic History Review*, second series, XVIII, no. 3, 1965, pp. 475-82.

[97]"Early Islamic Mint Output", prepared by a seminar at University of Michigan, *JESHO*, IX, 1966, pp. 212-41.

[98]Upendra Thakur, "Economic Data from the Early Coins of India", *JESHO*, XIV, 1971, pp. 269-85.

[99]D.D. Kosambi, "The Effect of Circulation upon the Weight of Metallic Currency", *Current Science*, XI, 1942, pp. 227-31. His articles on early Indian currency (especially punch-marked coins) written over a period of more than two decades are full of new insights, even if sometimes of questionable validity, and have been compiled by B.D. Chattopadhyaya in D.D. Kosambi, *Indian Numismatics*. For an assessment of Kosambi as a numismatist see Chattopadhyaya's introduction, ibid.

[100]Upendra Thakur, *Mints and Minting in India*.

[101]Marc Bloch, "The Problem of Gold in the Middle Ages" in his *Land and Work in Medieval Europe* provides useful guidelines for such a study. A meaningful writing on the history of gold in ancient India is F.R. Allchin, "Upon the Antiquity and Methods of Gold Mining in Ancient India", *JESHO*, V, 1962, pp. 195-211.

[102]The significance of Roman coins in Indian economic life has been discussed by B.D. Chattopadhyaya, *Coins and Curency Systems in South India c. AD 225-1300.*

[103]The perception of the period AD 500-1000 as one of the relative paucity of coins has been debated during the last two decades. Several scholars have questioned the idea of the paucity of metal money, notably B.N. Mukherjee. See his articles: "Commerce and Money in the Western and Central Sectors of Eastern India", *Bulletin of Indian Museum*, XVII, 1982, pp. 65-83; "Media of Exchange in Trade of Mid-Eastern India AD 750-1200", *JNSI*, XLV, pts. 1-2, 1983, pp. 159-65; "Bearing of the Excavations at Mainatmati (Bangladesh) on the Local Silver Coinages" in P.L. Gupta and A.K. Jha, eds., *Numismatics and Archaeology*, 2nd International Colloqium, Nasik, 1987; cf. S.J. Deyell, *Living Without Silver.* Recently the arguments of Mukherjee *et al* have been refuted by R.S. Sharma, *Metal Money in India,* Third Nathaniel Wallich Memorial Lecture, 28-29 October 1988, Indian Museum, Calcutta, 1988 (MS).

[104]The hypothesis of the revival of metal currency, trade and urbanism has been substantiated by several studies, e.g., B.D. Chattopadhyaya, "Markets and Merchants in Early Medieval Rajasthan", *Social Science Probings*, II, 1985; *idem*, "Urban Centres in Early Medieval India: An Overview" in S. Bhattacharya and Romila Thapar, eds., *Situating Indian History for Sarveppali Gopal*; Om Prakash Prasad, op. cit.; V.K. Jain, op. cit.

[105]R.S. Sharma, "Usury in Early Mediaeval India (AD 400-1200)", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, VIII, no. 1, October 1965, pp. 56-67 is a renewed attempt in this direction.

[106]G.L. Adhya, *Early Indian Economics,* and C. Margabandhu, "Trade Contacts between Western India and the Graeco-Roman World in the Early Centuries of the Christian Era", *JESHO*, VIII, 1965, pp. 316-22, illustrate how archaeological data may be useful for the study of early Indian crafts and commerce. In recent years, however, R.S. Sharma is the only historian to have woven the archaeological data into the historical reconstruction of early Indian economy. For example, see his *Material Culture and Social Formation in Ancient India,* and *Urban Decay in India (c. 300-c. 1000).*

[107]Outside the archaeological survey of India, several Indian universities have taken up excavation work. But two main problems handicap the historian. First, Indian archaeologists are finding it more difficult to publish the reports of their excavations than to dig a particular site. Secondly, most excavations done in India are vertical, though horizontal digging may yield more evidence relating to the material culture of the early period.

[108]R.S. Sharma, *Material Culture and Social Formation in Ancient India.*

[109]H.C. Bharadwaj, "Aspects of Early Technology in India" in D.P. Agrawal and A. Ghosh, eds., *Radiocarbon and Indian Archaeology*; *idem*, *Aspects of Ancient Indian Technology*; V.T. Athavale, "Chemical and Metallographic Examination of Metal Objects", *Ancient India*, nos. 20 & 21, pp. 135-39.

[110]B.D. Chattopadhyaya, "New Trends of Research on the Economic History of Ancient India" (mimeographed).

[111]Very few attempts have so far been made to study the population of early India, P. Nath, op. cit., pp. 117-23; K.M. Shambavnekar, "The Population of Ancient India", *ABORI*, XXXIII, 1953, pp. 82-96; J.M. Datta, "Population of India about 320 BC", *Man in India*, XLII, no. 4, 1962, pp. 277-91, are, however, works which should not be ignored. For recent studies of ancient Indian demography and settlements patterns on the basis of archaeological material see Brahma Dutt, "Settlements of the Painted Grey Ware in Haryana"; Ph. D. thesis, Kurukshetra Univresity, 1980; Makhan Lal, *Settlement History and Rise of Civilization in Ganga-Yamuna Doab.* For a discussion of historical archaeology and related problems see R.S. Sharma, *Urban Decay in India (c. 300-c. 1000)*, chapter 1; *idem*, "Keynote Address" in Amita Ray and Samir Mukherjee, eds.; *Historical Archaeology of India.*

[112]A. Ghosh, "The Kushan Levels at Some Excavated Sites in North India", *Journal of the Ganganath Jha Kendriya Sanskrit Vidyapeetha*, XXVII, 1971, pp. 233-42; R.S. Sharma, *Urban Decay in India (c. 300-c. 1000).*

2

*A Marxist View of Ancient Indian History**

In recent years there has been a phenomenal increase in the volume of Indian historical research, though the bulk of it follows the lines laid down either by the "leisurely and pontifical writings of the British administrators and scholars", or by the nationalist historians of pre-independence India who were largely motivated by the ideological needs of the freedom fighters. The influence of Western imperialist school is seen in the choice of such themes as dynastic histories isolated completely from their socio-economic milieu. The hangover of the nationalist bias is evinced in the writings of historians who are seriously preoccupied with proving that ancient India was the cradle of world-Aryan culture with colonies of its own among other peoples. These trends have gone a long way in making the water of Indian historiography rather stagnant and turbid, at times stirred by such researchers who try to "see India as part of Asia and the world and to explain its history in terms that are not peculiar to it alone but are of a more universal application." In this context the Marxist trend represented by D.D. Kosambi, an amateur and not a professional historian, has been playing a significant role in Indian historical research.[1]

D.D. Kosambi was best known as a mathematician, but was endowed with a truly Renaissance versatility. Apart from his contribution in the field of mathematics and genetics, his editions of the poetry of Bhartṛhari and of the *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa*, the oldest known Sanskrit anthology, are landmarks in Indian text-criticism. An unrivalled collection of microliths and discovery of a remarkable number of megaliths establish his fame as a prehistorian. As a historian his contributions are great. He wrote nearly one hundred articles on different aspects of ancient Indian history including numismatics on which he wrote a dozen pieces. In his study of coins, especially punch-marked coins, he used statistical method and thus established a direct relationship between his basic discipline of mathematics and history.[2] The results of his historical inquiries are summed up in his two

books, *Introduction to the Study of Indian History* and *Culture and Civilisation of Ancient India in Historical Outline*, both of which are written in a highly effective style and seek to strike at the very roots of traditional approach to Indian history. The former takes a long view of Indian history from earliest times to the imposition of the British rule and the latter, which forms the basis of the present paper, surveys the developments from the prehistoric phase to the emergence of feudalism in India.

Generally traditional Indian scholars have been highly allergic to Marxists who are held guilty of blatantly forcing the historical evidence to fit into a supposedly rigid framework laid down by Marx and Engels. Admittedly, some historians (e.g., Dange, Hussaini) have adhered to the orthodox Marxist scheme of periodization in reaction to which there has grown up a belief that Marxism stands-and falls-for a unilinear development of history. Not all this can be said of Kosambi who admits that "Indian history does not fit precisely into this rigid framework."[3] According to him ancient Indian society, unlike the Greek and Roman, cannot be characterized as based on slavery. Although some people were not free from earliest times to the present century, he holds that the importance of chattel slavery in the relations of production and as a supply of labour for economic production was negligible.[4] The place of the slave whose surplus could be expropriated was taken by members of the śūdra or lowest caste in older days. Kosambı's statement is especially true of the Vedic period when the number of slaves was very small and hence could not have engaged in productive activities like their Homeric counterparts. This is borne out by the fact that whenever the Vedic passages refer to the gift of slaves they invariably speak of women slaves made over to priests.

But during the period 400-100 BC, represented by the early Pāli texts and the *Arthaśāstra*, slaves emerge as a factor in production. The Pāli works, the oldest of which cannot be taken beyond 400 BC, indicate that in north-eastern India slaves and hired labourers were employed in cultivation, especially in large-sized fields ranging from 500 to 1000 *karisas*. This is confirmed by Kauṭilya who enjoins the superintendent of agriculture to requisition the services of *dāsas* and *karmakāras* for working on state farms. Though slaves participated in the productive activities of the community, it is not possible to find out their numerical strength, and therefore it is difficult to qualify to any significant degree Kosambi's statement cited above. Nevertheless, certain basic problems remain to be examined. For example, what precisely was the relation between śūdras and slaves? Again, how did the two producing classes, śūdras and slaves, stand in relation to their masters? Unless these questions are adequately

answered Kosambi's total denial of the existence of slavery in ancient India may not be acceptable. However, Kosambi does not show any procrustean adherence to slavery-feudalism-capitalism scheme. Slavery, he tells us, did not precede feudalism in Brazil, whereas it came in the USA without any fedualism at all, with the bourgeoisie for the development of cotton plantations.[5]

Nor does Kosambi seem to accept the concept of Asiatic Mode of Production unreservedly. Although never clearly defined by Marx and hence put to a highly tendentious use by Western scholars (e.g., Karl Wittfogel), there runs through his idea of Asiatic Mode of Production the concept of a society characterized by tribal communal ownership of land and a self-sustaining economy based on "a combination of manufacture and agriculture within the small community." Connected with this agriculture-manufacture *connubio* is the notion of both Marx and Engels about the slow-moving character of Oriental society, as can be inferred from the former's prominent reference to its "stagnatory and vegetative life" and the latter's remarks on its "tremendous staying power-thousands of years."

Kosambi departs from the orthodox notion of the "unchangeableness of Asiatic societies." After all, the very formation of the village economy with the plough used on a fixed plot of land implies a tremendous advance in the means of production.[6] Self-sufficiency, which according to the founders of Marxism is the characteristic feature of Asiatic societies, is not possible in the strict sense of the term. For, we are told, most of the Indian villages produced neither salt nor metals, the two essentials that had to be obtained by exchange. Nevertheless, it does remain true, according to Kosambi, that the Indian village became nearly self-contained from the Gupta period onwards owing mainly to the decline of trade and urban life.[7] This led to the break-up of the guilds of merchants and artisans who migrated to the villages to eke out a living by catering to the needs of the rural population. Though Kosambi accepts the notion of Asiatic society or Oriental commune with some reservation, some Marxists (e.g., R.S. Sharma, Irfan Habib) are chary of associating the idea of common ownership of land with the self-sustaining village economy. Thus there are a number of points of departure from orthodox Marxism noticeable in the book. Marxism is for him not a "substitute of thinking" as some anti-Marxists often feel, but a "tool of analysis" the importance of which was realized even by Gordon Childe who interpreted the vast mass of archaeological material with its application. Kosambi had demonstrated beyond doubt that dialectical materialism does not make the muse of history lie on the bed of Procrustes.

For all this Kosambi remains a Marxist. For him "history is the presentation in chronological order of successive changes in the means and relations of production."[8] His history does not flourish "under the aegis of the muse Clio who has an abacus to determine chronology and a trumpet to celebrate victories of kings and generals." Any 'personal', 'episodic' drum-and-trumpet history of India, he points out, "should be enjoyed as romantic fiction" or "like some Indian railway time table."[9] It is in accordance with this attitude that the author treats culture as the essential ways of the life of the people, and not purely as a matter of intellectual and spiritual values.

The type of history Kosambi seeks to reconstruct is difficult, more so in the case of India which has "virtually no historical records worth the name."[10] Whatever historical documents exist are overwhelmingly religious and ritualistic so that an attempt to extract history from them without some previous knowledge of the actual structure of Indian society at the time of writing "gives either no results or the ludicrous conclusions that may be read in most histories of India."[11] Such knowledge is possible only through archaeology and anthropology that guard the historian against the pitfalls which often beset a purely philological and linguistic approach. Archaeology helps documents to tell us how the people of the vanished age actually lived.

But here again the difficulty is that Indian archaeology is "not advanced enough to solve the really important questions, not even to ask some of them."[12] Therefore increasing use has to be made of anthropological data which are available in plenty in India. This implies that Indian archaeologists will be better at their own job if they were able to pass through the purlieu of anthropology first. There is nothing new or eccentric about Kosambi's stress on the ethnographic material. That historians might profit from an acquaintance with anthropology was suggested by Professor Tawney as early as 1933 in his Inaugural Lecture at the London School of Economics. Kosambi's renewed emphasis obviously derives from the fact that anthropological material offers a detailed analysis of phenomena roughly comparable to those which the historians are endeavouring to reconstruct with a good deal less evidence. Thus the technique followed by him is the collation of written records with archaeology and the interpretation of each of these in conjunction with ethnography.[13]

II

The profusely illustrated book, *Culture and Civilisation of Ancient India*

in Historical Outline, which sums up for the general reader the results of Kosambi's historical inquiries, consists of seven chapters, the first of which is introductory and focuses attention mainly on methodological problems. The remaining six deal with topics ranging from prehistory to the "long process of emergent feudalism and the decline of Buddhism, which brings us to the end of what may reasonably called ancient Indian culture."[14] The author, after demonstrating the groundlessness of the idea of any golden age in human history, brings into relief certain aspects of primitive pre-class society in India. He underlines the process of mutual acculturation between the food-producing advanced immigrants and the food-gathering aboriginals.

An important feature of Indian prehistory is that "food-gathering apart from hunting and fishing remained much easier over most of India and had a far greater range than in Europe or elsewhere in the Eurasian continent ... even a region of average fertility like Maharashtra has over forty kinds of indigenous staples, most of which are cultivated but can also be found wild."[15] Perhaps for this reason food-gatherers have lived side by side with food-producers, with resultant influences of the one on the other and *vice versa.* Kosambi culls several instances from his field work to show how some of the primitive techniques and ideas have survived in Indian life and thought to this day. His illustrations are mainly drawn from his home state of Maharashtra, though in recent years other scholars have also made use of the field work data from other parts of the country.[16]

Introducing the reader to the prehistoric civilization of the Indus valley, Kosambi explains why the first great urban development on the subcontinent should have taken place along a river that flows across a virtual desert.[17] The river is necessary for water and fish, an important source of food; the alluvial desert keeps the early population confined to a strip along the river, making food-gathering beyond a certain stage and range impossible, thus giving stimulus to the development of a food-producing economy, with a surplus necessary for the maintenance of urban centres. The world's ancient civilizations, he thinks, grew up along such rivers, perhaps because the more fertile valleys were too densely overgrown with forest or too swampy to be workable with the crude and inadequate tools available. According to him the loess corridors (with thin forest) which provided a reasonably fertile base for agriculture in the Danubian and Chinese prehistoric civilizations are as good as a surrounding alluvial desert.[18]

He, however, ignores the Bronze Age civilization of Crete and the neolithic cultures of Mexico and Peru, none of which is riparian or

associated with desert conditions. Although civilization grew up along the Indus and West Asian rivers flowing through similar geophysical conditions, the remarkable continuity of urban culture in Babylonia and Egypt was missing in India. In Mesopotamia, in a smaller area, and one not more fertile than the Indus basin, there were more than half a dozen cities. As compared to this, the Indus settlements were sparse; there were only two large cities. This was so because the Indus people, unlike their West Asian counterparts, did not practise canal irrigation, nor did they have the heavy plough.[19] These reconstructions seem reasonable, but need confirmation by subsequnt excavations.[20]

In point of fact, on several other assertions made in the chapter on the Indus valley, scholars may have reservations. Thus the Great Bath at Mohenjodaro may have been a ritual tank originally connected with primitive fertility rites, but one may not accept his interpretation of it as a prototype of the later sacred pond *(puṣkara)*.[21] It may be difficult to agree with the contention that "internal economic distribution was administered by the great temple and its priesthood"; he equates the citadel mound by the side of the Great Bath with the temple-ziggurat structures of Mesopotamia.[22] This implies that the Harappan state was theocratic, a proposition which is unwarranted in the absence of definite traces of temples like those of Mesopotamia in the region.

The Aryans, who brought the ruin to Indus cities, were pastoral, nomadic, patriarchal people, and, unlike the native inhabitants, used horse-chariot for war and ox-carts for heavy transport. Later they also mastered the use of plough and iron. Thus with a definite technological superiority over their predecessors, the Aryans gradually expanded eastwards, burning down the forest, first along the northern foothills and then in the plains, till the widespread use of iron implements made large-scale land clearing possible. Kosambi ascribes the origin of the caste system to the period of Aryanization of the Gangetic valley. He adduces the stories of Vasiṣṭha and Agastya, the two jar-born seers with non-Aryan antecedents, and considers their adoption into the high Aryan priesthood "a fundamental innovation."[23] He seeks to prove that it was through an interaction of the Aryan and autochthonous elements that "a new class of specialists developed which would eventually claim monopoly of all Aryan rituals—the Brahmin caste." This may embarrass the racist whose favourite pastime is to postulate an Indian home for the Aryans and an unequalled purity for their blood.

About the beginnings of a slave class Kosambi remarks: "the Aryans who moved eastward differed from the first invaders of India. A new sort

of tribal slave, the *dāsa,* was available for extra labour."[24] In his earlier work he says that "this was the beginning of the caste system in India."[25] This has been contested by Ingalls[26] whose alternative hypothesis about the possible role of famines in the proliferation of castes, if substantiated by patient research, may be no less valuable. Ingalls has approvingly emphasized the contentions of Hocart, according to whom, in Polynesian cultures caste is intimately connected with a belief in *mana*, and of J.H. Hutton who reports a similar belief among the Nagas of Assam.[27] Apparently any analysis of the origin of caste on the lines suggested by these scholars may go against the tenets of Marxism which does not seem to recognize 'superstructure' as a catalyst in historical process.[28] But one keeps wondering why Kosambi does not take account of the possible correlationship between the *mana*-superstition and caste, particularly in view of his admission that "no materialist can afford to neglect the effect of ideas on social development."[29]

The caste system had begun to crystallize in the later Vedic period leading inevitably to the predominance of the brāhmaṇa priesthood in an increasingly ritualistic religion, which developed during the transition of the Aryan society from pastoral to agricultural life, rendered possible presumably by the use of heavy plough and the availability of metal in significant quantity from the east from about 800 BC. Elsewhere, with regard to the use of iron in India, Kosambi has stated specifically: "the date 800-700 BC seems to me a reasonable beginning for the Iron Age in India."[30] The beginning of Iron Age in India, however, has been a matter of considerable discussion. Formerly it was held that iron was first introduced in India around the fifth and sixth centuries BC. But this goes against the later Vedic literary evidence as well as the presence of iron objects in pre-NBP level at several archaeological sites. The latest archaeological evidence available from Atranjikhera (UP) proves the existence of iron in the Painted Grey Ware strata dated 1000 BC or earlier by radiocarbon. Kosambi takes note of this in the postscript, but does not revise his opinion in the body of his book presumably because it was too late for him to do so.

Whatever the date of its earliest provenance in ancient Indian sites, iron played a significant role in transforming the pastoral Aryans into a class-oriented agrarian society whose reaction against Vedic ritual animal-slaughter may have paved the way for the heterodox religions—Buddhism and Jainism. Although the nature of evidence at our disposal precludes any conclusive proof of the causal relationship between iron technology and the development of new religions in the sixth century BC,[31] what lends

strength to Kosambi's thesis is the fact that iron also seems to have provided the material background of the origins of Judaism in Palestine, Zoroastrianism in Iran and Confucianism in China.

With the growth of agrarian society and the consequent break-up of the tribal society, the new religions (Buddhism and Jainism) naturally crossed the barriers of the tribe. The new philosophies that formulated and preached a doctrine beyond the tribe had their political counterpart. There was parallel move towards a universal government for society.[32] This can be seen in the process of transformation of north India into a monarchical government with Magadha as the seat of imperial power. Of the 16 *mahājanapadas* in the sixth century BC, only four, Licchavi, Malla, Kosala and Magadha, retained any importance in the final struggle for power that was fought at the end of the sixth and the beginning of the fifth centuries BC. Kosambi's explanation as to why Magadha, and not any other *janapada*, finally leaped into prominence, is highly convincing. Magadha, "destined to grow into India's first 'universal monarchy' and empire, controlled ... the supply of metals....The hills near Rajgir have the northern-most Dharwar outcrop, a geological formation in which iron is rather handily available. Rajgir has the added convenience of an easily defended perimeter of hills, fortified quite early with cyclopean walls, twenty-five miles in length, enclosing the inner walled city. ... Beyond Gaya came the primeval forest through which hardy explorers passed to locate copper and iron ores in the hills to the south-east, the richest such deposits in India ... This, then, was Magadha's great source of power, for that state used the metal systematically to clear the land and to bring it under the plough."[33] The ideal of a universal monarchy was, however, not fully realized until the time of Candragupta Maurya whose task of unifying the country was rendered easier by Alexander who defeated the tribes of the Punjab and made pastoral life difficult in the region.

The age of the Mauryas, to which Kosambi attributes the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya, witnessed an unprecedented expansion of village-economy, because the Kauṭilyan state itself was "the main land clearing agency, the greatest producer of commodities."[34] The Mauryan government flourished on a powerful cash economy and a vast salaried bureaucracy including the developed police system for coercion. But Aśoka, the grandson of Candragupta, much softened the coercive power of the Mauryan state by introducing serious changes in the administration. This can be inferred not only from the practice of quinquennial tours of the empire by the king and his high administrative officers but also from the fact that there came into

being a "new class of plenipotentiary supervisors *(dharmamahāmātras)* with control over official and special funds".[35]

During Aśoka's reign the Mauryan state seems to have fallen into financial straits. For, we are told, the state monopoly of metals was gradually being lost; copper mines in Bihar had begun to reach water-level; Magadhan supply of iron fell short of total demand for it. New sources of iron had been located and developed to some extent in Andhra and Mysore, but the expansion of the Mauryan power beyond river valleys of the north into the less fertile Deccan was precluded by the increasing financial difficulties that faced the administration. Here much of what Kosambi tells us remains conjectural and cannot perhaps be documented. But the continued debasement of coinage, to which he draws attention, indicates that the Mauryan treasury was impoverished and further expansion would only strain it all the more.

The eleventh chapter,[36] which is also the last, deals somewhat sketchily with main changes in the political, economic and religious life in the post-Maurya and the Gupta periods. In the north a welter of small tribes, both foreign and indigenous, divided the hegemony among them, whereas the Deccan was controlled mostly by the native dynasty of the Sātavāhanas. Under them the period witnessed the gradual subjection of the region to the plough—a process which, according to Kosambi, goes back to the fifth century BC. On the other hand, the brāhmaṇa priesthood, shorn of its Vedic ritualism, imposed itself on non-Aryan tribes, thus accelerating the process of mutual acculturation and their merger into general agrarian society. Flourishing trade with Roman empire made high commodity production possible as also the rise of a mercantile class which financed the establishment and construction of many Buddhist cave temples in western India.[37]

By the end of the Gupta period certain factors paved the way for feudalism. Overseas trade with the western world was interrupted by the fall of the Roman empire in the third century AD. The demand for village essentials, which had increased tremendously after the extension of village settlements, could not be met by the towns and cities. The total amount of coin in circulation, Kosambi points out, was not sufficient to support commodity production on a scale consonant with the increased population and growth of new village settlements.[38] The main problem therefore was of "servicing the village to make it self-contained without commodity production and cash payments."[39] This was solved by the gradual ruralization of artisans and craftsmen and the emergence of traditional Indian village community which fostered feudalism in India through centuries.

The ideological basis of the feudal society, Kosambi states, was

provided by the doctrine of *bhakti* which runs through the *Gītā*, a work, according to him, of not earlier than the third century AD.[40] The date of the *Gītā*, however, is highly controversial. Sukthankar has assigned it to the second century BC—a contention strengthened by some fresh Chinese evidence brought to light by S. Jaiswal .[41] Admittedly, it may be difficult to disagree with Kosambi when he points out the similarity between the doctrine of *bhakti* which advocated an "unflinching loyalty to a god (Kṛṣṇa) whose rather questionable personal record was not allowed to stand in the way" and the feudal ideology which "links together in a powerful chain the serf and retainer to feudal lord, baron to duke to king." But if the *Gītā* is placed in the last centuries before Christ, the cult of *bhakti* expounded in it cannot reasonably be treated as an ideological basis of the personal relationship that may have subsisted in feudal times between the lord and his retainer. For, in so doing one may be guilty of presuming that the work, which in the words of Kosambi himself was unpopular enough in the beginning to lead to the compilation of the 'insipid' *Anugītā*, determined the material life of the people.

Kosambi has something new to say on the decline of Buddhism. While Brahmanism, divested of expensive Vedic rituals, strengthened its hold on the newly-colonized areas and their aboriginal population, Buddhism and its vast unproductive monastic foundations served no useful purpose after the decline of trade and emergence of closed village economic units. The passing away of Buddhism was logical when it "had become a drain upon the economy instead of stimulus."[42] Here evidently Kosambi's formulation is too simplistic, especially when judged in the context of Hindu temples. We have ample evidence to show that early medieval Indian temples amassed fabulous wealth mainly through donations. Most of them played significant role in the economic life of the country, especially in the south, if not by investing their accumulated wealth in trade at least by extending the area of cultivable land and thus augmenting of economic production of the adjoining areas. What however is difficult to explain in the light of Kosambi's contention is that these temples have survived through centuries and attract a large number of pilgrims from distant regions of India to this day, though, without doubt, they are a serious drain on Indian economy in that they increase the total volume of unproductive wealth and reduce the capital investment potentially. If Kosambi's thesis were true, all famous Hindu temples shouls have decayed and dwindled by now through sheer neglect.

It is not only in broad generalizations that one may differ with Kosambi; even in matters of detail there is scope for difference of opinion. Kosambi's

unusual faith in the totemic origin of names and *gotras* goes to irritating lengths.[43] His statement that the Mauryas derived their name from peacock totem[44] does not sound convincing, for it is mentioned in the list of birds killed for the royal kitchen till Aśoka's time (R.E.I.). In spite of all this, the importance of Kosambi's interpretation and analysis cannot be minimized. In fact his conclusions remain a set of valuable hypotheses which researchers have been trying to test in the light of data available through diversification of sources.

The *Culture and Civilisation of Ancient India in Historical Outline* gives evidence of the superb mind of its author who throws up on every page some fresh and stimulating idea. Many Indians, however, will be horrified by Kosambi's attacks on their cherished dogmas, the seeds of which are sown not only through granny's tales told around a family fireplace in an informal atmosphere, but also through the class-room lectures in a somewhat sophisticated manner. On page 102 of the work he writes: "A modern orthodox Hindu would place beef-eating on the same level as cannibalism, whereas Vedic brahmins had fattened upon a steady diet of sacrificed beef." On page 114 he states: "The *Gītā* with its brilliant Sanskrit and superb inconsistency is a book that allows the reader to justify almost any action while shrugging off the consequences. The many-faceted god (Krishna) is likewise inconsistent, though all things to all men and everything to most women." Again he speaks of the *Gītā*: "This divine but rather scrambled message with its command of expository Sanskrit is characteristically Indian in attempting to reconcile the irreconciable, in its power of gulping down sharp contradictions painlessly."[45]

These are only some of the mordant assertions made by Kosambi; there are many more in the book. Evidently he is an iconoclast for whom ridicule is the first step in sapping the foundations of a faith which has become effete in the context of changed material conditions. "It is doubtless more important", he tells us, "to change history then to write it" (p. xi). Here one is naturally reminded of Karl Marx who observed more than a century ago: "The philosophers have so far interpreted the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to change it." The orthodox historians would not therefore hesitate in characterizing the writings of Kosambi as subversive. But he has these historians in mind when he writes: "the principal aim of history, as hitherto written, has been the presentation of great events in a chronological sequence. However, the relative importance of events rarely appears the same to the people of another time, place, civilization, class bias, so that a mere chronicle does not suffice. The course of social development, the inner causes which ultimately manifest themselves in the

striking events, the driving forces which underlie great movements, have to be made clear before any work can be dignified by the name of serious history. Yet this type of analysis is not always welcome to some historiographers. They, or the people who really condition their version of history, are unwilling to face the inevitable consequences of this procedure. For the implication is necessarily that all history can be so analyzed, hence current events too; but if so, it follows that the course of events can be influenced by deliberate action, that history has hereafter to be consciously made by those that live it, not merely set down after a safe interval of time by the professional historian. This is clearly dangerous to those who would suffer by the change, usually those in power. Thus such historical writing is labelled subversive. History then remains a means of escape, a romantic pastime, a profession, or a method of inducing submissiveness; it cannot become a scientific pursuit."[46]

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[1]For a brief biographical sketch of D.D. Kosambi see V.V. Gokhale, "Damodar Dharmanand Kosambi" in R.S. Sharma, ed., *Indian Society: Historical Probings*, pp. 1-15.

[2]Kosambi's articles on punch-marked coins have been compiled by B.D. Chattopadhyaya in *Indian Numismatics*. For an assessment of Kosambi as a numismatist see Chattopadhyaya's introduction to the above volume. For a general assessment of Kosambi's contribution to Indology see Dale Riepe, "D.D. Kosambi: Father of Scientific Indian Hisotry", R.S. Sharma, ed., op. cit., pp. 34-44; Romila Thapar, "The Contribution of D.D. Kosambi to Indology", *JASB*, New Series, 1977, pp. 52-55, 365-84.

[3]*CCAIHO*, p. 25. [4]Ibid., p. 23. [5]Ibid., p. 24.

[6]The myth of millenary stagnation of Indian society has been ably exploded by R.S. Sharma who marks definite stages in the development of its economic basis till the beginning of feudalism from the Gupta period onwards. See his *Light on Early Indian Society and Economy*, pp. 52-89; *Perspectives in Social and Economic History of Early India.*

[7]The idea of the decline of trade and urban centres implicit in Kosambi's work was subsequently developed by R.S. Sharma in his paper "Decay of Gangetic Towns in Gupta and post-Gupta Times", *PIHC*, 33rd session, Muzaffarpur, 1972, pp. 98-103. More recently he has published a full length study of the problem: *Urban Decay in India (c. 300-c. 1000).*

[8]*CCAIHO*, p. 10. [9]Ibid., p. 23. [10]Ibid., p. 9.

[11]Ibid., p. 10.

[12]Ibid., p. 13.

[13]For a detailed treatment of Kosambi's methodology see his article "Combined Method in Indology", *Indo-Iranian Journal*, VI, 1963, pp. 177-202.

[14]*CCAIHO*, p. 25.

[15]Ibid., p. 34.

[16]R.S. Sharma, *Material Culture and Social Formations in Ancient India.*

[17]*CCAIHO*, pp. 58-59.

[18]Ibid., p. 58.

[19]Ibid., p. 62.

[20]A good deal of archaeological exploration and excavation work done during the last two decades have, however, considerably modified our understanding of the Indus civilzation. For a synthesis of recent researchs on the subject see: Bridget and Raymond Allchin, *The Rise of Civilization in India and Pakistan*; G.L. Possehl, *Ancient Cities of the Indus; idem, Harappan Civilization: A Contemporary Perspective.* These works also provide a useful bibliography of the relevant literature generated in recent years.

[21]*JAOS*, LXXVII, p. 220.

[22]*CCAIHO*, p. 69.

[23]Ibid., p. 83.

[24]Ibid., p. 83.

[25]*ISIH*, p. 93. Kosambi has also expressed some of his ideas on the caste system in "Early Stages of the Caste System in Northern India", *JBBRAS*, no. XXII, 1946, pp. 33-48.

[26]*JAOS*, LXXVII, p. 222.

[27]Ibid.

[28]For a critical assessment of the literature on caste see Suvira Jaiswal, "Studies in the Social Structure of the Early Tamils" in R.S. Sharma, ed., op. cit; *idem*, "Studies in Early Indian Social Hisotry: Trends and Possibilities", *IHR*, VI, nos. 1-2, 1980, pp. 1-63.

[29]*CCAIHO*, p. 28.

[30]*JESHO*, VI, p. 318.

[31]R.S. Sharma, "Material Background of the Origin of Buddhism" in Mohit Sen and M.B. Rao, eds., *Das Kapital Centenary Volume*, pp. 59-66; *idem*, *Material Culture and Social Formations in Ancient India*, chapter VII amply supports what appears in Kosambi's work as a weak hypothesis about the rise of heterodox sects.

[32]*CCAIHO*, p. 120.

[33]Ibid., p. 123.

[34]Ibid., p. 133.

[35]Ibid., p. 161.

[36]Ibid., p. 106-210.

[37]Recent writings, however, do not present as glowing a picture of the Indo-Roman trade as does Kosambi's work. For example see H.P. Ray, *Monastery and Guild.*

[38]*CCAIHO*, p. 195.

[39]Ibid., p. 195.

[40]For detailed discussion see D.D. Kosambi, "Social and Economic Aspects of the Bhagavadgītā" in *Myth and Reality*, pp. 12-41; also see his "The Avatāra Syncretism and possible sources of the Bhagavadgītā", *JBBRAS*, XXIV-XXV, 1948-49, pp. 121-34.

[41]S. Jaiswal, *The Origin and Development of Vaiṣṇavism.*

[42]*CCAIHO*, p. 185.

[43]For his detailed views on the point see his following articles: "Early Brahmins and Brahminism", *JBBRAS*, XXIII, 1947, pp. 39-46; "Origin of the Brahmin Gotras", *JBBRAS*, XXVI, 1950, pp. 21-80; "Brahmin Clans", *JAOS*, LXXIII, 1953, pp. 202-8.

[44]*CCAIHO*, p. 188.

[45]Ibid., p. 207.

[46]"The Study of Ancient Indian Tradition", *Indica*, The Indian Historical Research Institute Commemoration Volume, 1953.

3

*Land Revenue in the Maurya and Gupta Periods**

Although our sources are eloquent about the principles of taxation, they are less so about the modes of assessment of land revenue about which the *Arthaśāstra*[1] is the first early Indian work to give us some idea. Thus one of the duties of the *gopa* (officer-in-charge of 5 or 10 villages) is stated to be to prepare various registers, such as those of boundaries and village fields, uncultivable lands, and of transfers. He is further required to compile what may be called census-lists of dwelling houses, to specify therein whether the houses are taxable or tax-free, and to state the taxes charged upon them severally under the heads of cash payment, unpaid labour, tolls and fines.[2] The *Arthaśāstra*[3] further provides for the deputation of inspectors by the *samāhartā* in the selected villages, where he is to check up and report on the various heads of revenues assessed on the dwelling houses and the remissions granted to them. It, therefore, follows that in Maurya times land revenue and connected charges were probably assessed upon the individual holding of the villagers.

Land revenue appears to have been normally charged on individual holding in the Maurya period, but collective assessment on whole villages was not unknown. Kauṭilya[4] mentions *piṇḍakara* under the heading *rāṣṭra* (country parts). This term is explained by his commentator Bhaṭṭasvāmin as comprising taxes levied from whole villages. Evidently it stood for a lump assessment upon village as distinguished from principal land tax which was assessed on individual holdings of land.

In post-Maurya and Gupta times *piṇḍakara* or any other term of similar import is not mentioned in our sources, which implies the absence of collective assessment of any tax on an entire village. The older practice of charging revenue on individual holdings, however, seems to have continued in this period. This can be inferred from the Sātavāhana land charters, which record gifts of plots of land in specified villages.[5] The fact that in these instances the granted fields were to be enjoyed by individuals may

suggest that to a certain extent the assessment of land revenue was made upon individual holdings.

The land grants of the Gupta period testify more clearly than the earlier ones to assessment on individual holdings of land. The two charters[6] belonging to the region of modern Indore-one of Mahārāja Svāmidāsa (*c.* AD 386-417) and the other of Mahārāja Bhuluṇḍa (*c.* AD 426-27)-record donations of lands in favour of the brāhmaṇas. Since the holdings of individual cultivators were sought to be donated here, it may suggest that villagers were separately assessed for land revenue. Similarly, an undated inscription of the Parivrājaka ruler Hastin,[7] who ruled in the Baghelkhand region of central India, records the gift of half of the village of Dhavasandika. At least two other epigraphs of the Parivrājaka Mahārājas refer to a portion of a village or portions of two different villages forming the object of gift.[8] Again, several documents of the Maitrakas, who ruled in the Gujarat-Kathiawad region probably from the fifth century onwards, mention the king's gift of fields (along with the royal dues therefrom) or wells or both, lying in the extremities of specified villages and forming in many cases the holdings (*pratyāya*) of the cultivators whose names are mentioned. Thus in the Goras copper-plates (AD 643) of Dhruvasena II a field consisting of three pieces and measuring 100 *pādāvartas* in the village called Bahumūla is granted. The record states that the field lay to the north of the field of Devī. Another field of 100 *pādāvartas*, donated according to the same record, is described as having the *brahmadeya* field of Sthavira in its west and the holding of Kuṭumbi Kuhuṇḍaka in the north.[9] All this may imply that the villages concerned were not assessed collectively but with reference to individual holdings.

A study of the rate of land tax, as prescribed in our sources, reveals that often the quality of land was an important consideration in assessing land revenue. Gautama,[10] who probably belongs to the pre-Maurya period, prescribes three distinct rates, viz., 1/6, 1/8, and 1/10. The commentator Haradatta takes these rates to apply to different types of soil.[11] Kauṭilya mentions an income called *ṣaḍbhāga*, which perhaps refers to land revenue.[12] In another place, the *Arthaśāstra* records the expression *dhānyaṣadbhāga*, one-sixth of the grain as being taken by the king. This, however, does not mean that Kauṭilya recognizes the uniform rate of 1/6 in all cases. Elsewhere[13] he himself states that upland and lowland are to be recorded separately by the *gopa*. While laying down the rules for extraordinary revenue he further contemplates unhusked grain to be assessed at 1/3 or 1/4 of the crop of rich soils which are independent of rainwater, but soils of intermediate and inferior qualities are evidently as-

signed lower rates.[14] Among the lawgivers of the later period, Manu[15] ordains that a king can take 1/6, 1/8, or 1/12 of the crops. This passage is quoted in the *Vīramitrodaya*, where it is remarked that the option laid down is based on the varying fertility of the soil and the consequent greater or less labour involved in cultivation.[16] Bṛhaspati[17] lays down the rates of 1/10, 1/8 and 1/6 on *khila* land, on the land exposed to the rain-water, and on the crops harvested in the spring season respectively. *Khila* land may be taken as cultivable waste,[18] the cultivation of which may entail more than the usual cost. Similarly, lands exposed to the dangers of rain-water make a rich harvest uncertain, and the crops harvested in the spring season are least subject to risks. Perhaps in view of these considerations Bṛhaspati prescribes three distinct rates of land tax, which are the same as laid down by Gautama.

Land tax may have been assessed at rates in keeping with the varying fertility of the soil, but most authorities prescribe the rate of 1/6. Manu, who has been quoted earlier as advocating three different rates, states at one place that the king who affords no protection and yet receives the sixth part of the produce takes upon himself all the sins of his people.[19] Both Viṣṇu[20] and Nārada[21] mention 1/6 to be the usual rate of land revenue. It is repeatedly stated in the Śānti Parva that the king is entitled to 1/6 of the produce. The rate of 1/6 seems to have been so deeply associated with popular sentiments that the king is often known by the appellative *ṣaḍbhāgin*.[22] A similar attitude is reflected in the works of Kālidāsa, who states that the king can claim 1/6 produce of land from the people.[23] He further tells us that the ascetics living in the forest pay the sixth part of their penances;[24] and he refers to them as placing 1/6 of the rice collected by them on the bank of the river to be taken by the royal officers.[25] Thus it seems that the rate of 1/6 was perhaps normally prevalent, though of course, variations may have been admissible.[26]

Although 1/6 seems to be the theoretically accepted rate, the account of Megasthenes suggests that in spite of the injunctions of Kauṭilya the Mauryan land tax was much higher. Ghoshal has taken Megasthenes' statement as quoted by Diodorus to mean that the cultivators ordinarily paid 1/4 of the produce to the Mauryan state.[27] The relatively high rate of Mauryan land revenue is also attested by the Rumindei pillar inscription of Aśoka, which records the royal order that the village Lumbini, by virtue of its being the birth-place of the Buddha, is liable to 1/8 of the *bhāga* (*aṭṭhabhāgīya*) and exempted from *bali*. Since this concession was made by Aśoka for the holiest place of his faith and since complete remission of the land revenue was not thought of in the Maurya period, it seems that land

revenue was fixed sufficiently high to make its reduction to the ratio of 1/8 amount to a very great favour.[28] It appears that although in theory Kauṭilya prescribes 1/6 as the normal rate of land tax, in practice the ratio was much higher; and not less than 1/4 if the Greek testimony is accepted. We do not, however, know whether in the post-Maurya and Gupta periods there was a similar discrepancy between theory and practice. It is curious that the contemporary inscriptions do not give any indication of the rate of land tax, although the occurrence of the expression *dharmaṣaḍbhāga* in several Gupta epigraphs may suggest that the rate of 1/6 was in vogue. This may mean that the king's normal grain share was realized at lower rates in Gupta times than in the Mauryan days.

Equally pertinent and no less controversial is the question whether land tax was imposed on the gross income or on the profit of the cultivator. With regard to tax on merchants our sources implicitly indicate an attempt to shift the burden of taxation on the net profit, but the lawgivers nowhere explicitly state that land tax was assessed on the agriculturists' profit. Kullūka explains a passage of Manu quoted above to mean that the king's share is to be estimated on the increase upon the capital employed. Medhātithi and Govinda are concurrent, and Nandana even more clearly states: "In every case, the share is on profit made after deducting expenses." But as the commentators belong to a later period their interpretation of the Smṛti passages may not apply to the period under study. Among the contemporary sources the Śānti Parva[29] broadly recognizes the criteria of income and expenditure in determining the king's share, though, strangely enough, other sources do not seem to suggest that land tax was assessed on the cultivator's profit. However, there may have existed a broad recognition of the fact that taxes should fall on the profit and not on the capital, but how far this principle was observed specifically in relation to land tax is largely a matter of speculation.

The main item of land revenue appears to have been the customary royal share of the agricultural produce sometimes known as *bhāga*. As the designation of a specific tax on land, the word *bhāga* first occurs in the *Arthaśāstra*.[30] At one place it is mentioned as an independent term along with *bali, kara*, etc., under the heading *rāṣṭra*; at another[31] it forms a part of *ṣaḍbhāga*, which is mentioned with *bali, kara*, etc., under the same general heading. Therefore, "*bhāga* undoubtedly means the king's customary share of the produce normally, though not universally, amounting to 1/6th"[32] Kṣīravāmin, the twelfth century commentator of the *Amarakośa*, also quotes the view of the *Arthaśāstra* to define *bhāga* as the king's 1/6th share of produce.[33]

Bhāga seems to have been the principal tax on land in later times as well. In the Junagadh inscription of Rudradāman the royal treasury is said to have been filled with *bali, śulka* and *bhāga*, and the Sudarśana dam is said to have been built without oppressing the people with *kara, viṣṭi* and *praṇaya*.[34] Since the latter three taxes are referred to as oppressive, *bhāga*, which is not mentioned as such, perhaps stands for the main item of land revenue, i.e., king's normal grain-share. The inscriptions of the Gupta period recording grants of land to the brāhmaṇas frequently refer to the donee's exemption from *bhāgabhogakara*[35] among the other levies. Fleet[36] considers the term *bhāgabhoga* to be one expression meaning "enjoyment of taxes or shares". The two words, however, are sometimes used in the reverse order and recorded as *bhogabhāga*.[37] If we construe this term in the same manner as Fleet does the first, it would mean share of the enjoyment. But really speaking, this term is a compound formed by two separate taxes. Therefore Sircar's[38] explanation of the *bhāga* of inscriptions as the royal share of the produce may be nearer the truth.

Another fiscal expression, *bali*, occurs in early Indian sources. It is the oldest Indo-Aryan term for the royal revenue. In the *Ṛgveda* it is the king's due both from his subjects and from conquered kings.[39] Macdonell and Keith,[40] however, suggest that *bali* was from the very beginning of the nature of a tax not depending solely upon the free will of the subjects. In fact, it is hardly likely that even a tribal chiefdom of the Vedic age could subsist on purely voluntary contributions. In any case, in the period of the *Brāhmaṇas*, *bali* seems to have been known as a compulsory contribution payable by the subjects;[41] and, if ever voluntary it was, in the later period it may have remained so only in name. It is not unlikely that in ancient India there continued for some time the contradiction between the revenue terminology and its actual content.[42]

With the gradual development of revenue nomenclature and the emergence of new items of taxation, the word *bali* appears to be all the more intriguing in its connotation. *Bali* as used in the *Arthaśāstra* is essentially of the nature of a petty cess over and above the king's normal share of the produce,[43] whereas in the *Jātakas*[44] the term often means additional and oppressive cesses, though in Aśoka's inscription it is mentioned as distinct from the *bhāga*.[45]

In contrast to the sources mentioned above, the *Milindapañho* mentions *bali* as emergency tax from which the four chief ministers are declared free.[46] This may imply that the import of the term underwent some change in post-Maurya times. But the Junagadh inscription of Rudradāman[47] (AD 150) which is the only epigraph of our period recording *bali* in the sense

of a tax, does not corroborate the view incorporated in the *Milindapañho*. The mention of *bali* in the *Milindapañho* in the sense of an emergency levy cannot be taken to be a local variation because the area of composition of the work, and Junagadh, where the inscription of Rudradāman is found, are quite near to each other. Nor does any other source take *bali* to mean an emergency impost. It is, therefore, not unlikely that the use of *bali* in the sense of an emergency tax in the *Milindapañho* is a case of misrepresentation.

The *bali* of the inscriptions has often been taken to mean a religious tax. Thus Thomas[48] interprets the term as mentioned in the Rummindei pillar inscription of Aśoka to mean some kind of religious cess. Although the inscription of Rudradāman, where *bali* occurs in the sense of tax, records it with other fiscal terms such as *śulka* and *bhāga*, the epigraphs of the Gupta period invariably treat *bali* as one of the five sacrificial performances, the four others being *caru, sattra, vaiśvadeva* and *agnihotra*. Thus *bali* in this context cannot mean any tax. What is more important, it does not figure in the list of taxes from which the beneficiaries were generally exempted in the Gupta period and later times.

Bali is mentioned as tax mostly in legal and literary writings, which often ignore *bhāga* in its technical sense. In connection with the rate of land tax Viṣṇu[49] as well as Manu[50] refer to *bali* and not to *bhāga*; similar is the case with the *Rājadharma* section of the Śānti Parva.[51] Aśvaghoṣa[52] also mentions *bali* in the sense of regular land tax. Bṛhaspati,[53] who probably belongs to the Gupta period, refers to *bali* in the same sense. At one place in the *Mahāvaṁśa*, a work of the Gupta period, the levy of *bali* is said to be very essential, which may imply that it was perhaps the basic land tax.[54] In the *Amarakośa*,[55] assignable to about the fifth century AD, the term is used as a synonym of *śulka* and *kara* in the general sense of tax.[56] From all this it appears that the *bali* of the Dharmaśāstras and general literature is identical with the *bhāga* of the inscriptions.

Kara is another form of revenue known from our sources. As a fiscal term it appears to have been unknown to the earlier literature, but in the *Arthaśāstra* and the law-books it is of frequent occurrence. In a passage of Manu[57] it is differently interpreted by various commentators. According to Medhātithi *kara* means gifts of commodities (*dravyadānam*) and according to Sarvajñanārāyaṇa a fixed gold payment on land (*bhūminiyataṁ deyaṁ hiraṇyam*). Rāmacandra interprets the term as contribution in the form of grass, wood, etc. (*gulmadāyādikam*), and Kullūka takes it to denote contribution from villagers and townsmen either monthly or in Bhādrapada and Pauṣa (*grāmapuravāsibhyaḥ pratināsaṁ vā bhādrapauṣa*

niyamena grāhyam). According to Rāghavānanda, however, *kara* is a monthly payment by villagers (*grāmavāsibhyaḥ pratimāsikam*). The last two interpretations are very much in accordance with Bhaṭṭasvāmin's explanation of the term in the commentary on Kauṭilya.[58] Bhaṭṭasvāmin understands *kara* to mean "the annual tax paid during the months of Bhādrapada, Vasanta and the like."[59] With it may be connected the definition of *kara* in the *Arthaśāstra* text quoted by Kṣīrasvāmin,[60] i.e., it is a charge upon all movable and immovable articles. *Kara* thus may have been a periodical tax levied more or less universally from villagers, and it may have been realized over and above the king's normal grain-share. This is corroborated by the Junagadh inscription of Rudradāman[61] (*c.* AD 150), in which the king's treasury is said to have been filled by *baliśulkabhāgaiḥ* while the Sudarśana dam is said to have been built without oppressing the people with *kara*, forced labour (*viṣṭi*) and benevolence (*praṇaya*). The use of *bali* at one place and *kara* at another seems to indicate that both cannot stand for tax in general. In other words, *kara* in certain contexts appears to have been an oppressive impost and therefore different from, and over and above, the general land tax.

Literary, and particularly epigraphic, sources, however, by and large, indicate that *kara* was a general tax. Aśvaghoṣa[62] takes the term in the broad sense of taxes. In the Allahabad inscription of Samudra Gupta, *kara* is used in the sense of tax in general.[63] Again, the spurious Gaya copper-plate of Samudra Gupta[64] provides that the taxpaying (*karada*) cultivators and artisans should not be allowed to settle in a certain gift village. The mention of artisans as taxpaying may indicate that *kara* is used to denote all the taxes, including those paid by the cultivators as well as the artisans. Likewise in the land grants *akaradāyī*[65] denotes one who is exempt from taxes in general. Some of the records bear expressions such as *sarvakaraparihāraiḥ*,[66] *sarvakarasametaḥ*[67] and the like, which may simply imply that *kara* comprised all taxes. On the other hand, in an inscription[68] *kara* stands for all kinds of contributions other than land revenue (*bhāga*) and *bhoga*, and yet in another[69] it excludes *śulka*, *bhāga*, *bhoga*, and *hiraṇya*. Hence the term *kara* is used indiscriminately in both general and specific sense in varying contexts, and it is difficult to ascribe any definite meaning to it. It seems to have been some kind of land revenue, but its exact nature cannot be determined.

Like the above-mentioned items of land revenue, *hiraṇya* appears in most of the early Indian sources. The *Arthaśāstra*[70] refers to it as a branch of king's revenue. Kauṭilya[71] tells us that the *samāhartā* (collector-general) should prepare a written record (*nibandha*) specifying *inter alia* the

contributions payable by the villagers severally and collectively under the heads of grain, domestic animals, *hiraṇya*, forced labour and so forth. Curiously enough, the *Arthaśāstra*[72] does not include *hiraṇya* in its regular list of constituents of the body of income (*āyaśarīram*), which suggests that in the Maurya period it was an irregular levy. The *Arthaśāstra*, however, definitely lays down a rate for its collection. In the traditional story of the origin of kingship recorded by Kauṭilya, the people, having chosen Manu as their king, undertake to contribute 1/6 of the crops, 1/10 of merchandise as well as *hiraṇya* as his share.[73] In a similar context the *Mahābhārata*[74] prescribes 1/10. Though Patañjali states that *hiraṇya* makes a king wealthy, he does not use the term in the sense of any specific land tax, let alone the question of fixing any rate of payment in this connection. But in the law-books of the post-Maurya period *hiraṇya* definitely figures as an item of king's regular revenue; and Viṣṇu[75] and Manu[76] prescribe its rate at 1/50. From the Gupta period onwards, the land grants, with the possible exception of the Vākāṭaka charters, mention this term in the list of revenues from which the donees are stated to have been exempted. But they do not give us any clue as to the rate at which *hiraṇya* was paid to the state. In any case, we can be sure that all through our period it constituted an important and established item of royal income.

The term *hiraṇya* in the contexts referred to above, however, has been variously interpreted by different scholars. The word as occurring in the *Arthaśāstra* has been translated simply as gold.[77] The *hiraṇya* of the law-books is sometimes taken as gold, and sometimes either as a tax on the hoard or a tax on the capital of the annual income.[78] But in view of its high value, it is highly improbable that peasants paid taxes in gold.

The clue to the proper interpretation of the term, Ghoshal rightly points out,[79] is furnished by certain conditions of land revenue prevalent in later times. In the medieval period payments of the land revenue before the reform introduced by Todarmal were made in kind, but certain classes of crops (called *zabti*) were always assessed in cash on the ground that it was very difficult to divide them into shares.[80] Ghoshal, therefore, makes a reasonable guess that *hiraṇya* was a tax of this nature, more precisely, a tax in cash levied upon certain special kind of crops as distinguished from the tax in kind which was charged upon the ordinary crops.[81] Sircar also endorses this view.[82] It may be pointed out that we have reference to a tax on certain agricultural products, collected in cash. An inscription dated AD 592 states that the tax for sugarcane plantation within a specified area (*vaṭa*) was 32 silver coins, though it was only $2^1/_2$ silver coins if the field

belonged to a religious donee.[83] It is further stated in the same record that the tax for an *allavāṭa* was half the amount prescribed above. *Alla* is the Prākṛt form of Sanskrit *ardraka*, ginger, and *allavāṭa* may possibly mean 'a ginger plantation'. Since taxes on certain types of products were paid in cash, we may expect that *hiraṇya* was some times levied on commercial crops.

Although several Kauṭilyan items of land revenue continued down to the Gupta period, the case is different with irrigation tax (*udakbhāga*), an important revenue head of the Maurya state,[84] which constructed reservoirs filled with water, either perennial or drawn from other sources.[85] This tax is mentioned by Kauṭilya in the chapter on the cultivation of crown lands under the supervision of the superintendent of agriculture (*sītādhyakṣa*),[86] and therefore Ghoshal takes it to refer to royal farms.[87] But a closer examination of the *Arthaśāstra* material suggests that the *udakabhāga* refers to non-crown lands. It is stated in the *Arthaśāstra* that the crown tenants should receive 1/2 of the yield when they employ their own capital and 1/4 or 1/5 when the state supplies the implements and other necessaries.[88] In the first case the state would receive 1/2 and in the second it would get 3/4 or 4/5. If in addition to this, the state received a water tax at the rate of 1/5, 1/4 and 1/3 as the case was, then practically nothing would be left to the crown tenants.[89] Thus it appears probable that water taxes were levied from the cultivators of non-crown lands. But it is not known whether in the Maurya period the irrigation levy was collected from the peasants in addition to the land tax or the latter was inclusive of the former.

There is a conspicuous lack of consolidated evidence in regard to irrigation in post-Maurya and Gupta times; and the scattered references that we get do not point to anything like irrigation levy (*udakabhāga*) of Maurya times.[90] Nor does it figure in the long list of taxes from which brāhmaṇas or beneficiaries were exempted in post-Maurya and Gupta land grants.[91]

The absence of irrigation tax in our period might have been at least in part due to the fact that the state generally ceased to bear the main responsibility for irrigation and consequently could not claim any cess for that reason.[92] Manu's injunction against the seizure of houses, tanks, orchards, and fields by others may mean that tanks were owned and constructed by individuals for irrigational purposes.[93] Manu ordains that amongst other things selling ones own tank, garden, wife or child is a sin to be expiated by penance.[94] Again, Nārada states that if a man were to repair a dike without the permission of its owner he shall not be entitled to

profit out of it.[95] Thus the law-books seem to suggest some kind of individual management of irrigation tanks, dams, reservoirs, etc., which, in turn, means that irrigation might have been to a certain extent an individual concern. Dion Chrysostom (*c.* AD 50-117) also informs us that in order to convey water from large and small rivers in India, the local inhabitants made many channels.[96]

That the individual initiative and cooperative efforts played considerable part is borne out by a number of inscriptions from the Śaka-Kuṣāṇa and Gupta periods and is also supported by the law-books of the early centuries of the Christian era.[97] However, the state did not entirely cease to bear responsibility for irrigation. The Hathigumpha inscription[98] of Khāravela, the Junagadh inscriptions of Rudradāman[99] and Skanda Gupta,[100] among others, testify to the royal initiative in this sphere. Probably the state spent its resources only on the implementation of comparatively bigger projects, beyond the means of an individual. Thus with limited state initiative in the sphere of irrigation in post-Maurya and Gupta times, there remained perhaps no justification for any regular irrigation levy (*udakabhāga*) of the Maurya period.

The disappearance of the Mauryan *udakabhāga* in post-Maurya and Gupta times need not necessarily mean a fall in the burden of taxation. For unlike the terms discussed above, we come across certain fiscal expressions such as *uparikara* and *udraṅga*, which are mentioned in inscriptions only from the Gupta period[101] onwards and do not occur in any pre-Gupta source. According to Fleet[102] the word *uparikara* is derived from *upari* or *upri* and means "a tax levied from the cultivators who had no proprietary rights in the soil." In inscriptions, however, the word is recorded invariably with *udraṅga*, which has led Ghoshal to suggest that the two fiscal terms are used antithetically. He thus explains *udraṅga* as a tax levied from the permanent tenants and *uparikara* as a tax imposed on the temporary ones.[103] He associates *uparikara* with the Marathi word *upri*, which means a cultivator not belonging originally to a village, but residing and occupying land in it, either upon a lease for a stipulated term of years, or at the pleasure of the proprietor. The evidence for this, it has been suggested, is very tenuous, since the Marathi language developed ten centuries after the date of our inscriptions.[104] The same is true of Fleet's interpretation. Moreover, in most land grants the two terms occur together, and if *uparikara* and *udraṅga* mean taxes on temporary and permanent tenants respectively, it would imply that a certain piece of donated land was cultivated both by permanent and temporary tenants simultaneously which obviously seems absurd. Of course, in case of village grants[105] the presence

of both types of tenants cannot be altogether discounted, but in the case of charters which record the grant of pieces of land[106] with the assignment of *uparikara* and *udraṅga* this could not have been possible. Nor is there any independent evidence to show that the government used to impose any extra special tax on temporary and permanent tenants. There is besides no reason why the state records should distinguish the tax paid by the permanent tenants from that obtained from the temporary ones.[107]

Barnett rejects the view of Ghoshal altogether, and suggests that *uparikara* is something like the Tamil *melvaram*, i.e., crown's share of the produce. According to Altekar,[108] on the other hand, *uparikara* is identical with *bhoga* which consisted of contributions in the shape of articles of provisions. Both the contentions, however, appear erroneous in the context of the Gupta evidence. In the Karitalai copper plate inscription of the Mahārāja Jayanātha dated AD 493-94[109] the terms *uparikara* and *udraṅga* occur, as also the expression *bhāgabhogakara*. Therefore *uparikara* can neither be equated with *melvaram* in Tamil, nor with *bhoga*. Since *upari* in Sanskrit, Hindi and Bengali means 'upon' or 'extra',[110] it perhaps has led Sircar[111] to explain *uparikara* as an 'extra cess'. But it must be admitted that none of the explanations so far offered is conclusive. The interpretation of the term bristles with difficulty, particularly because of the conspicuous reticence of the literary sources on the subject.

It is equally difficult to interpret the term *udraṅga*, which like *uparikara* occurs only in the land grants and not in the literature of the period. Bühler,[112] first of all, pointed out that the *Śāsvatakoṣa* gives for *udraṅga* the equivalents *uddhāra* and *udgrantha*. Following this source, Fleet takes *udraṅga* to mean the share of the produce usually collected for the king.[113] But we have already noted that sometimes *udraṅga* and *bhāga*, which probably means the regular land tax, occur in one and the same grant, and therefore it is not likely that the former could mean king's own usual grain-share. Ghoshal,[114] on the other hand, interprets *udraṅga* as a tax on permanent tenants and has been supported by Sircar[115] in this contention. But the explanation is untenable for the reasons given above. Maity offers two alternative explanations. According to the first, *udraṅga* may have been an anomalous derivative of the Sanskrit word *udaka* and thus may have meant something like a water tax.[116] But, as has been shown above, we have no independent evidence to prove the prevalence of anything like water-tax in the Gupta period. According to another explanation given by Maity,[117] *udraṅga* may be the same thing as a *draṅga* which according to the *Rājataraṅgiṇī*,[118] a late work, is a watch-station; and the term may have stood for a police tax levied on the district for the maintenance of the local

police station. This view is more or less endorsed by Puspa Niyogi.[119] It is difficult to say anything with certitude either in favour or against the plausibility of this explanation. Probably, like *uparikara*, *udraṅga* may have also been a levy over and above the usual grain share, though any attempt to determine its exact nature will only be conjectural unless some fresh evidence is forthcoming.

The land grants of the Gupta period mention several other terms like *halikākara*,[120] *ditya*,[121] *meya*,[122] or *tulyameya*[123] and *dhānya*,[124] none of which is referred to in any source other than the contemporary epigraphs. No indication is available in earlier or contemporary sources about the meaning of *halikākara*, which is recorded only in two land charters of the Ucchakalpa ruler Sarvanātha,[125] who seems to have ruled in the Baghelkhand region in the last part of the fifth century and the early part of the sixth. Ghoshal suggests that *halikākara* may mean a tax on ploughs.[126] What, however, may have been the precise nature of a tax on ploughs is not possible to ascertain. Maity opines that the above-mentioned term may connote an extra tax imposed upon the area which could be cultivated by one plough.[127] Although *hali* as a measure of land does seem to be the likely object of a special tax, there is evidence to imply that in later times land was sometimes taxed according to its area.[128] On the other hand, we know that plough taxes were levied from the people down to Mughal times.[129] Even though taxes on ploughs and on the area of cultivation may have been in vogue in later times, this cannot be taken to suggest conclusively that *halikākara* stood for either. The exact meaning of the term, therefore, appears to be uncertain.[130]

The word *ditya*, which occurs in the Surat plates of the Traikuṭaka king Vyāghrasena, literarally means "that which is to be given".[131] The expression is recorded in the inscription as *sarvadityaviṣṭi-parihāreṇa* meaning exemption from all dues and forced labour. This may mean that *ditya* denoted all taxes except forced labour and thus appears to have a very wide connotation.

The term *meya*, which is mentioned in some eastern as well as central Indian epigraphs of the Gupta period, is generally followed by the term *hiraṇya*. In the Madhuban copperplate inscription of Harṣa,[132] however, the term is recorded as *yathā-samucitatulyameyabhāgabhogakara*. *Tulyameya* here may have been used as an adjective of *bhāgabhogakara*, and the entire expression may thus mean the king's normal revenue in kind that can be weighed and measured. But in the Gupta records, *meya* does not occur along with *bhāgabhogakara*, which makes it likely that *meya* was a substitute for a general land tax known as *bhāga*.

The term *dhānya* also appears to have denoted the general land tax. Most land grants mention *dhānya-bhogakara* in place of *bhāgabhogakara*, which shows that *dhānya* occurs in place of *bhāga*. The Kurud plates of Narendra of the year 24, palaeographically assignable to the fifth century AD, however, record *dhānya* with *bhoga* and *bhāga*.[133] Again, a grant of the Maitraka ruler Dharmasena II bears the expression *sadhānyabhāgabhoga-hiraṇyadeya*.[134] This may be taken to imply a distinction between *bhāga bhoga* on the one hand and *dhānya* on the other. Ghoshal suggests that probably *dhānya* was a fixed contribution in kind and *bhāga* a share of the produce.[135] The expressions *dhānya*, *meya* and *ditya*, however, do not appear together in our inscriptions, which may imply that all the three carry more or less the same connotation, though *ditya* may have had a comparatively wider application.

Although the foregoing discussion of land revenue terms is far from exhaustive it appears that several fiscal terms indicating taxes on land in the *Arthaśāstra* continued to be in use down to the Gupta period, though their precise meaning in the context of changing times may be difficult to understand. Thus such taxes as *bhāga*, *kara* and *hiraṇya* of the *Arthaśāstra* find mention not only in the *Smṛtis* but also in the land grants of the later period. On the other hand, *piṇḍakara* and *udakabhāga* do not occur in the later sources, which may to a certain extent preclude the possibility of their existence in the Gupta period. But our sources indicate that certain new land revenue terms such as *uparikara*, *udraṅga* and *halikākara* appear for the first time in the Gupta period. In addition to these there may have been several other taxes in existence at that time, because the enumeration of dues in the contemporary inscriptions is usually followed by the word *ādi* or *ityādi* (et cetera). We may add that in a few Pallava charters donees are granted land with eighteen *parihāras*, though only eight of them are enumerated.[136] The Basim grant of the Vākāṭaka king Vindhyaśakti II records as many as fourteen *parihāras*.[137] While all these may point to an increased burden of taxation in the Gupta period, the incidence of all the taxes may not have fallen on every individual tax-payer.[138]

REFERENCES

*This is the revised version of the paper published in R.S. Sharma, ed., *Land Revenue in India: Historical Studies*.

[1]Our discussion of the Mauryan land revenue is based primarily on Book II of the *Arthaśāstra* which is one of the earliest portions of the work and is largely

Mauryan in content; for it seems to jibe well with the evidence of Megasthenes (R.S. Sharma, *Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions in Ancient India*, pp. 200-21). Although Thomas Trautmann, on the basis of the statistical analysis of the entire text, asserts that it was compiled by three or four individuals, he also supports the view that Book II of the text is largely Mauryan in content (*Kauṭilya and the Arthaśāstra*, pp. 169-87). This is further strengthened by S.C. Mishra ("An Inscriptional Approach to the Study of the Arthaśāstra of Kauṭilya", Ph.D. thesis, Delhi University, 1984, pp. 369-82), though his conclusions regarding the final compilation of the *Arthaśāstra* differ from those of Trautmann.

[2]*AŚ*, II.35. In the Roman Empire also, the periodical census furnished lists of the living inhabitants with an estimate of their wealth, so that they could be arranged in classes and their tax could be assessed. This census-list distinguished between the various categories of land: fields under cultivation, plantation of vines or of olives, woods and pastures. Moreover, homes and other buildings were also included in the list, together with movables, furniture, slaves, and even cash savings, all this being regarded as an extension of the landed property, since the incidence of the tax was upon the land itself and not upon its possessor (Victor Chapot, *The Roman World*, pp. 95-96).

[3]*AŚ*, II.35.

[4]Ibid., II.15.

[5]*Lüder's List*, nos. 1162, 1163, 1164, 1166, 1167, etc.

[6]*EI*, XV, no. 16 (1 and 2).

[7]*grāmārddho*, *CII*, III, no. 29, 1.8.

[8]*IA*, VIII, pp. 8, 28.

[9]Disalkar, "Some Unpublished Copper-plates of the rulers of Valabhi", *JBBRAS*, I (New Series), pp. 51-52; for similar references see *IA*, I, p. 16; VII, p. 70; VIII, p. 301.

[10]*Gautama*, X.24.

[11]Haradatta on *Gautama*, X.24.

[12]*AŚ*, II.15.

[13]Ibid., II.35.

[14]Ibid., V.2.

[15]*dhānyānāmaṣṭamo bhāgaḥ saṣṭho dvādasa eva vā*, *Manu*, VII.130.

[16]Vide G.N. Jha, *Notes on Manusmṛti*, pt. 2, p. 466.

[17]*Bṛhaspati*, I.43.

[18]Maity, *The Economic Life of Northern India in the Gupta Period*, p. 24.

[19]*Manu*, VII.308.

[20]*Viṣṇu*, III.24.

[21]*Nārada*, XVIII.48.

[22]*AŚ*, II.15; *Viṣṇu*, III.22; Nārada quoted above; *ŚP*, 69.24, 72.10.

[23]*Raghu*, II.66.

[24]*Sāk.*, II.13.

[25]Ibid., p.76.

[26]Curiously enough the land charters nowhere directly lay down the rate of land tax to be realized from the villagers, although such terms as *aṣṭabhāgika* and *dharmaṣaḍbhāga* give some indirect idea.

[27]*Hindu Revenue System*, p. 168.

[28]Ibid., p. 171.

[29]*ŚP*, 120.9.

[30]*AŚ*, II.6.

[31]Ibid., II.15.

[32]U.N. Ghoshal, "Some Hindu Fiscal Terms Discussed", *Proceedings of the Fourth Oriental Conference*, II, p. 205.

[33]*rājagrāhyaḥ ṣaḍbhāgādiḥ*, Kṣīrasvāmin's comm. on *Amar*, II.8, 28.

[34]*EI*, VIII, no. 6, 1.14.

[35]*CII*, III, no. 26, 1.9; no. 27, 1.11; no. 28, 1.17 etc.

[36]Ibid., p. 254, n.4; p. 120, n.1.

[37]Ibid., no. 39, 1.68; no. 40, 1.12; no. 41, 1.14 etc.

[38]*Sel. Ins.*, p. 372, n. 7; cf. *EI*, XV, pp. 293 ff; Majumdar, *History of Bengal*, I, 277.

[39]Cf. *Hindu Revenue System*, p. 45.

[40]*Vedic Index*, II, 62.

[41]*Ait. Br.*, VII, 29.

[42]R.S. Sharma, *Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions in Ancient India*, p. 132.

[43]Ghoshal, "Some Hindu Fiscal Terms Discussed", op. cit., p. 203. For a detailed discussion of *bali* in the *AŚ*, see N.N. Kher, *Agrarian and Fiscal Economy in the Mauryan and post-Mauryan Age (c. 324 BC-AD 320)*, pp. 292-96; also see D.N. Jha, *Revenue System in Post-Maurya and Gupta Times*, pp. 43-44.

[44]*Jāt.*, I, pp. 199; II, p. 240; III, p. 9; V, p. 98.

[45]G.M. Bongard-Levin, *Mauryan India*, p. 200. R.S. Sharma thinks that *bali* became regular when sufficient surplus was made available in the age of the Buddha as a result of the use of the iron ploughshare and other iron tools and also because of the introduction of paddy transplantation. R.S. Sharma, "Taxation and State Formation in Northern India in pre-Mauryan Times", *Social Science Probings*, I, no. 1, March, 1984, p. 29.

[46]*Milinda.*, p. 146.

[47]*EI*, VIII, no. 6, 14.

[48]Thomas, *JRAS*, 1909, p. 467. For further discussions by Charles Lyall and K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, see *JRAS*, 1908, pp. 850-1; *IHQ*, XX, pp. 285-7 respectively.

[49]*Viṣṇu*, III.22-23.

[50]*Manu*, VII.130.

[51]*ŚP*, 69.24; 72.10.

[52]*Buddacarita*, II.44; *Saundaranadkāvya*, II.33.

[53]*Bṛhaspati, Āpaddharma* section, verse 20.

[54]*Mahāvaṁśa*, XXVII.4.

[55]According to Bongard-Levin (op. cit., p. 260), *bali* is a synonym of *bhāga* in the *Amarakośa*. Cf., N.N. Kher, op. cit., p. 300.

[56]*Amar.*, II. 8.28.

[57]*Manu*, VII.307.

[58]*AŚ*, II.15.

[59]*Karaḥ prativarśadeyaḥ bhādrapadikavasamikādyupādānam*, comm. on *AŚ*, II.15; *JBORS*, XI, pt. 2, pp. 83-4.

[60]*pratyakaṁ sthāvarajangamādideyaḥ karaḥ*, comm. on *Amar.*, II.8.28.

[61]*EI*, VIII, no. 6, 11.15-16.

[62]*Saundaranandakāvya*, II.27.

[63]*CII*, III, no. 1, 1.22.

[64]Ibid., no. 63, pp. 1, 13.

[65]Ibid., no. 55, pp. 1, 26.

[66]*EI*, XXIV, no. 9, 1. 14.

[67]Ibid., XXIII, no. 18, 1.10. Other expressions of a similar import used in the inscriptions are *sarvakaradānasametaḥ* (*CII*, III, no. 81, 1.22), *sarvakaravisarjitaḥ* (ibid., no. 41, 1.9), *sarvakaratyāgaḥ* (ibid., no. 29, 1. 97). The word *kara* in these compounds bears the sense of tax in general.

[68]*CII*, III, no. 26, 1. 9.

[69]*EI*, I, no. 11, 1. 15; VII, no. 22, 1.15.

[70]*AŚ*, I.13.

[71]Ibid., II.35.

[72]Ibid., II.6.

[73]Ibid., I.13.

[74]*ŚP*, 67.23.

[75]*Viṣṇu*, III.25.

[76]*Manu*, VII.130.

[77]Shamasastry, *Arthaśāstra*, Eng. tr., p. 158.

[78]N.C. Bandopadhyaya, *Kauṭilya*, pp. 139-40.

[79]*Hindu Revenue System*, p. 61.

[80]For reference see ibid., p. 62.

[81]Ibid., p. 62.

[82]*Sel. Ins.*, p. 372.

[83]*EI*, XXX, no. 30, 1. 20.

[84]*AŚ*, II.24.

[85]Ibid., II.1.

[86]Ibid., II.24.

[87]*Hindu Revenue System*, p. 31.

[88]*AŚ*, II.24.

[89]N.N. Kher (op. cit., p. 317) seeks to support the *Arthaśāstra* evidence with the help of Greek sources.

[90]Ibid., II.24.

[91]R.S. Sharma, *Light on Early Indian Society and Economy*, p.100.

[92]Ibid.

[93]*Manu*, VIII.264.

[94]Ibid., XI. 62.

[95]*Nārada*, XI. 20, cf. *Yāj.*, II.157.

[96]Oratio, XXXV, p. 434, McCrindle, *Ancient India as Described in Classical Literature*, p. 175.

[97]R.S. Sharma, *Light on Early Indian Society and Economy*, pp. 100-1.

[98]*EI*, XX, no. 7, 1. 3.

[99]Ibid., VIII, no. 6, 11. 9-16.

[100]*CII*, III, no. 14, 1. 17.

[101]Ibid., no. 21, 1.12; no. 22, 1.16; no. 23, 1.7; no. 26, 1.8; no. 29, 1.9; no. 31, 1.8; no. 38,1.26; *EI*, XIII, no. 28, 1.17. Senart thinks that *sakarukara* of a Sātavāhana grant (*EI*, VII, no. 7 (14), 1. 3) is the natural equivalent of *sodraṅga soparikara*. This view, as Senart himself recognizes, is wholly conjectural, although there is nothing improbable in the *udraṅga* and *uparikara* taxes going back to the Sātavāhana period (*Hindu Revenue System*, pp. 188-89).

[102]*CII*, III, p. 98, n.1.

[103]*Hindu Revenue System*, p. 210.

[104]Maity, op. cit., p. 61.

[105]*CII*, III, nos. 21-23, 26, etc.

[106]Ibid., no. 38.

[107]Altekar, *Rāṣṭrakūṭas and Their Times*, p. 216.

[108]Ibid.

[109]*CII*, III, no. 26, 11. 8-9.

[110]Maity, op. cit., p. 62.

[111]*Sel. Ins.*, p. 266.

[112]*IA*, XII, p. 189, n. 39.

[113]*CII*, III, pp. 97-98. Altekar is also of the view that *udraṅga* meant *bhāga*, the normal land tax (Altekar, op. cit., p. 216).

[114]Ghoshal, "Some Hindu Fiscal Terms Discussed", op. cit., p. 210.

[115]*Sel. Ins.*, p. 371, n. 5.

[116]Maity, op. cit., p. 62.

[117]Ibid.

[118]*Rājataraṅgiṇī* (Stein's trans.), II, pp. 291-2.

[119]*Contribution to the Economic History of Northern India.*

[120]*EI*, XIX, no. 21, 1.10; *CII*, III, no. 30, 1.13.

[121]*EI*, X, no. 13, 1. 6; XI, no. 21, 1.11.

[122]*CII*, III, no. 60, 1.12; *EI*, II, no. 30, 1.8; V, no. 16, 1.9; IX, no. 53, 1.9; X, no. 16, 1.15.

[123]*EI*, VII, no. 22, 1.15.

[124]Ibid., XXXI, no. 22, 1.12; no. 39, 1.21; *CII*, III, no. 38, 1.26.

[125]The Sohawal copper-plates of the year 191, *EI*, XIX, no. 21, 1. 10; the Khoh copper-plates of the year 197, *CII*, III, no. 30, 1.13.

[126]*Hindu Revenue System*, p. 213.
[127]Maity, op. cit., p. 63.
[128]*Cambridge History of India*, IV, p. 450.
[129]Ibid., p. 454.
[130]For a recent discussion of the term see Y.B. Singh, "Halikākara: Crystallization of a Practice into a Tax", *PIHC*, 43rd session, Kurukshetra, 1982, pp. 130-33.
[131]*EI*, IX, no. 21, 1.11.
[132]Ibid., VII, no. 22, 1.15.
[133]Ibid., XXXI, no. 35, 1.12.
[134]*IA*, VII, p. 72.
[135]*Hindu Revenue System*, p. 219.
[136]*Sel. Ins.*, pp. 439-40; *EI*, XV, no. 11.
[137]Ibid., pp. 408-9.
[138]For a discussion of the increase in tax burden and of the resultant economic bondage of peasants from the Gupta period onwards see D.N. Jha, *Revenue System in Post-Maurya and Gupta Times*; *idem*, *Early Indian Feudalism: A Historiographical Critique*, Presidential Address, Section I, Indian History Congress, Waltair, 1979; R.S. Sharma, *IF*; *idem*, "How Feudal was Indian Feudalism?", *JPS*, XII, nos. 2-3 (1985). Also see *infra*, chapters 4 and 6.

4

Feudal Social Formation in Early India

Although Marx wrote on Indian history in the nineteenth century, his influence on Indian historical scholarship cannot be traced back earlier than the forties of the present century. It showed explicitly in the writings of B.N. Datta, who, as a young revolutionary in exile visited Moscow in 1921 and came into contact with the world communist movement. Taking a long view of the socio-economic developments throughout the ancient period, he spoke at length of the class struggle in ancient India and of the growth of feudalism.[1] Close on his heels came S.A. Dange, one of the founders of the communist movement in India, who sought to prove the emergence of the slave society in the later Vedic period on the basis of the material cleverly collected from the Vedic texts.[2]

Datta and Dange wrote at a time when both Indian intelligentsia and the British imperialism, under whose tutelage the former was reared, dreaded Marxism. Hence one would vainly expect any academic recognition for Marxists. Both Datta and Dange were also handicapped by the lack of academic training and the limited availability and knowledge of the source material. Not surprisingly they often interlarded their conjectures with quotations from Marx and Engels resulting in what would now appear to be a crude and schematic application of Marxism to early Indian history.

Although most of their conclusions do not stand scrutiny, they are the first to have viewed early Indian society as a changing one and to have attempted an explanation of historical developments in terms that are not peculiar to India but are of somewhat universal application.

The preoccupation of the Indian Marxists with the problems of change and continuity in our early society has often led them to reject even some of Marx's own ideas on Asian/Indian history. Thus writing in the fifties D.D. Kosambi for the first time expressed reservations about Marx's concept of Asiatic Mode of Production (AMP). As we are aware, Marx and Engels never clearly formulated the paradigm of AMP but only made

scattered references to its components such as state-controlled irrigation, absence of private property in land, autarkic villages, absence of towns, etc., so as to explain the phenomenon of Oriental despotism and often expressed divergent views on their relative importance.[3] Even so there runs through Marx's idea of the AMP the concept of a society characterized by tribal communal ownership of land and a self-sustaining economy based on an agriculture-handicrafts *connubium* and hence marked by a "stagnatory" and "vegetative life" and a "tremendous staying power."

The notion of "the unchangeableness of Asiatic societies" and that of the Oriental despotism, both derived from the concept of AMP, have, however, been seriously questioned by Indian historians. The myth of millenary stagnation of early Indian society has been ably exploded by D.D. Kosambi and R.S. Sharma[4] who mark definite stages in the development of its social polity till the beginning of feudalism from about the middle of the first millennium. Neither of them accepts the scheme implicit in the AMP which would appear both inadequate and invalid if subjected to the modes of proof particular to the Marxist theory. Recent researches have shown that the concept of AMP does not correspond to the early Indian situation which is marked by the existence of the private property in land and of a ruling class around the king which expropriated the surplus from the masses.[5] Systematic studies of the archaeological material, likewise, have proved the existence of many towns, and several phases of urbanization have been postulated in different parts of the country.[6] All this has led to a rejection of the AMP paradigm by the Indian Marxist historians, who have tried to apply the basic tenets of historical materialism to the study of early Indian social formation.[7]

The theoretical emancipation of Indian historians from Marx's loosely knit construct of the AMP initially led some of them to accept the Marxist periodization of European history as a hypothesis for the analysis of the historical evidence[8] without any procrustean adherence to it. Thus as early as 1950 Kosambi argued against the mechanical application of Marx's scheme of periodization to the history of India and asserted that Marxism is a tool of analysis and not a substitute for thinking. In view of the fact that India is a very large country with the utmost diversity of natural environment, language and historical course of development, he said, neither in the means of production nor in the stages of development can one think of an overall homogeneity in the oldest times.[9] European parallels therefore may not always be a useful guide in reconstructing the history of India where course of developments was different in many ways. The general reluc-

tance of Indian Marxist historians to look for one-to-one correspondence between historical developments in India and Europe[10] has, however, not led to a total rejection by them of what may seem common to both. This is evident from the fact that they have been basically concerned with the process of social change manifesting itself in diverse ways[11] and that it is from this vantage point that they have analyzed the early medieval situation which they have characterized as feudal.

Although the first Indian Marxist historian to refer clearly to the growth of feudalism in early India was B.N. Datta,[12] it is only in post-Independence period that the discussion of the problem gained momentum as is evident from the writings of D.D. Kosambi and R.S. Sharma, who in spite of their rejection of the idea of self-sufficiency implied in the AMP, agree that by the end of the Gupta period the Indian village became nearly self-contained owing mainly to the decline of trade and urban life. The simple structure of the closed peasant economy, Kosambi seems to believe, was disturbed during the early centuries of the Christian era when the kings began to transfer their fiscal and administrative rights over land to their subordinate chiefs who thus came into direct relation with the peasantry, a process he terms "feudalism from above." It reached an advanced stage of development during the period of the Guptas and Harṣa. Kosambi holds that at a later stage "a class of landowners developed within the village between the state and the peasantry, gradually to wield armed power on the local population"—a process he calls "feudalism from below".[13] Sharma does not apparently join issue with Kosambi but produces evidence which contradicts the two-stage theory of Indian feudalism.[14] According to him, feudalism in India, unlike in Europe, began with the land grants made to brāhmaṇas, temples and monasteries for which the epigraphic evidence begins from the first century BC and multiplies by Gupta times when villages together with their fields and inhabitants, with fiscal, administrative and judicial rights (with the right to enjoy fines received) and with exemption from the interference of royal officials were given to religious beneficiaries. What was abandoned step by step to the priestly class was later given to the warrior class. Religious as well as secular (service) grants became increasingly popular with the emergence of local and self-sufficient economies marked by lack of commercial intercourse, decline of urban life and paucity of coins. The growth of feudal property in India came to be linked with the undermining of the communal rights in land, as is evident from the later grants which refer to the transfer of the communal resources (e.g., pastures, forests, water reservoirs, fisheries, etc.) to the

beneficiaries. The economic essence of Indian feudalism, like that of European, it has been argued, lay in the rise of landed intermediaries leading to the enserfment of the peasantry through restrictions on peasant mobility and freedom, increasing obligation to perform forced labour *(viṣṭi)*, mounting tax burdens and the evils of subinfeudation.[15] The crucial element in Sharma's chain of earlier arguments is the premise that there took place around the middle of the first millennium AD a decline in urban commodity production and foreign trade resulting in the growth of a self-sufficient economy in which metallic currency became relatively scarce and hence all payments (whether to priests or to the government officials) had to be made through assignment of land or of revenues therefrom.[16]

Although the relative decline in commodity production and trade, the gradual paucity in metallic currency and the consequent growth of self-sufficient economy are borne out by evidence which has been reinforced over the years, it may not be easy to postulate a causal connection between them and the growth of the practice of making land grants, the emergence of the class of landed intermediaries and other feudal developments. Attention may, for example, be drawn to the work of B.D. Chattopadhyaya[17] who has listed 600 south Indian epigraphic references to coins of various denominations and whose inventory contains all references, with the exception of six or seven, from the post-ninth century period when the practice of making donations of land in peninsular India, as indeed in other parts of the country, became very common and certainly more widespread than it may have been in the preceding phase when we have evidence of gradual disappearance of metallic currency and of languishing trade. Also there has been in the past few years some realization of the theoretical weakness of the explanation of the feudal developments only in terms of foreign trade whose decline, to a large extent, depended on the factors external to the Indian situation.[18] To attach greater importance to foreign trade than it deserves (as indeed has been done by both Kosambi and Sharma) within the Marxist frame of analysis would imply that the ancient Indian society did not possess any built-in potential for change—a position implicit in the Marxist concept of the AMP. Thus rejection of the concept of the AMP on the one hand and the acceptance of the idea of feudal developments on account of factors not directly related to the Indian context on the other give rise to an anamolous and contradictory theoretical situation. It is this theoretical impasse which has recently led to a rethinking on the part of the exponents of the Indian feudal model from the vantage point of the internal social contradictions with which such surface mani-

festation as the decline of trade, paucity of coins and the growth of closed economy would have to be largely linked. Thus it has recently been argued that a deep social crisis, reflected in the description of the Kali age in various epic and Purāṇic passages datable to the late third and early fourth centuries, was a prelude to the feudalization of Indian society.[19] Attention has been drawn to the fact that the Kali age is characterized, among other things, by *varṇasaṁkara*, i.e., intermixture of *varṇas* or social orders, which implies that the vaiśyas and śūdras (peasants, artisans and labourers) either refused to perform producing functions or else the vaiśya peasants declined to pay taxes and refused to supply the necessary labour for economic production. A close study of the descriptions of the Kaliyuga indicates that this was a period of sharp social conflict and crisis, largely generated by a two fold social contradiction: the one between the brāhmaṇas and kṣatriyas on the one hand and the vaiśyas on the other; the other between the brāhmaṇas and the śūdras. This led to the weakening of the traditional brāhmaṇical social order and, in its wake, of whatever elements of slavery may have remained there.[20] Although there may be many dimensions to the social tension in the early centuries of the Christian era, from the economic point of view, one may legitimately ascribe it to the earlier method of extracting surplus from the producing classes and distributing it among the various sections of the ruling class. The solution of the sharp class antagonism therefore lay in finding out a new mechanism of surplus extraction. Thus the state gave up the earlier practice of collecting taxes directly through its agents and then distributing them among its priestly, military and other employees. Instead it now began to assign land revenues directly to priests, military chiefs, administrators, etc., for their support. In contrast to Vedic times when no land could be transferred without the consent of the clan and when the practice of land transfer was practically non-existent, the new situation enabled the king to grant land to the leading members of the community who thus became responsible for the appropriation and consumption of the surplus in the form of what may be described as feudal rent.[21]

Doubts may, however, be expressed about the validity of the above explanation of the transition to feudal society. The Kali age is described in almost all the early *Purāṇas* and even if we keep the medieval *Purāṇas* out of consideration, it is possible to identify at least three sets of Kali descriptions assignable to the third-fourth, eighth and tenth centuries.[22] Since most of these descriptions are conventional and repetitive their chronology becomes uncertain as also their value for historical reconstruc-

tion. No less pertinent is the fact that the *Kalivarjyas* (practices forbidden in the Kaliyuga), which are inextricably linked with the notion of Kali age, do not find place in any of the relevant Purāṇic and epic passages. They seem to have crystallized around the eleventh-twelfth centuries nearly half a millennium later than the earliest Kali description in the *Purāṇas* and the *Mahābhārata*, and were finally codified in the first half of the seventeenth century by Dāmodara in his *Kalivarjyavinirṇaya*.[23] All this indicates the necessity of a critical and rigorous examination of the relevant literary material. But it is not possible to dismiss the Kaliyuga theory out of hand; for there is considerable epigraphic evidence[24] to corroborate the earliest Kali description and to suggest that during the first half of the first millennium Indian society was really caught up in the throes of a crisis, a crisis severe enough to lead to a major social transformation.

The Kali explanation of the transition from pre-feudal to the feudal society in India should apparently be applicable only to the heartland of the country and to the areas where brāhmaṇical order was well-established enough to generate a social crisis. But the available epigraphic evidence indicates that the practice of granting land and the growth of landed intermediaries first began in outlying, backward and tribal areas. In Maharashtra it began in the second century AD and covered a good part of Madhya Pradesh during the fourth and fifth centuries. In eastern India (e.g., Bengal and Bangladesh) it became common during the fifth-sixth centuries. The spread of the practice may be seen in Orissa in the sixth-seventh centuries. In Assam it began in the seventh century and in Kerala in the eighth century. The areas where the land grant economy first made its appearance were, thus, on the periphery of the regions with firmly entrenched brāhmaṇical order and had nothing to do with the social crisis and decadence reflected in the idea of the Kaliyuga. The logic behind this, however, is not difficult to comprehend. There may have already been considerable pressure on land in the fully brahmanized areas on account of the agrarian advance which was made during the rule of the Mauryas. Hence the practice of donating land or village began in regions where land was plentiful, leading to an unprecedented agricultural expansion in a situation of crisis generated by a sharp social conflict. It also led to the spread of the brāhmaṇical settlements and ideology in newer areas and thus facilitated the process of acculturation of the tribal population of India. Not surprisingly a direct transition from tribalism to feudalism has been postulated in some peripheral area (e.g., Assam).[25]

The challenge to the premises on which the model of early Indian feudalism is based, has often come from such quarters as seem to be

reluctant to recognize the elements of change in Indian society. Thus although the practice of land grants and the growth of landed intermediaries around the middle of the first millennium AD can also be appreciated against the background of the emergent self-sufficient economy, it has been wrongly contended that trade did not decline and coins did not become scarce in the centuries following the Gupta rule.[26] On the basis of the literary references to the donation of land and villages made by kings as early as Vedic times it has been argued that what has been described as Indian feudalism is not different from landlordism which may have been prevalent throughout the Indian history.[27] Similarly, it has been asserted that there was no change in the pattern of land grants throughout ancient India.[28] Evidently such uniformed criticisms seek to project early Indian society as static and immutable and thus to perpetuate, perhaps unconsciously, the imperialist British historiographical cliché of the changeless East.

What has not been but needs to be adequately appreciated is the fact that the Indian Marxist historiography, opposed to the British view of Indian past, has used the west European model of feudalism to explain social change in India from the middle of the first millennium. This is based mainly on the assumptions of comparative historical method which furnishes new hypothesis and is nothing more than "a tool for dealing with problems of explanation".[29] Therefore Marxist writings have emphasized both the similarities and dissimilarities between the basic economic developments in Europe and India during the Middle Ages.

There has, for instance, persisted in Indian historiography, albeit implicitly, the thinking that the manorial system distinguishes European developments from Indian ones. The land of the *seigneurie* (manor), though not ubiquitous throughout Europe, was divided into two parts, *demesne* and *manse*, each quite distinct but linked with the other by very close ties of interdependence.[30] The *demesne*, consisting of houses, farm-buildings, gardens, heathland or forest, fields, meadows and vineyards amounted to a large farm, cultivated under the immediate direction of the lord and his agents. The *manses* were small or middle sized holdings cultivated by the lord's tenants who owed him various customary dues and, more important still, services, so that they helped in the cultivation of his *demesne*.[31] Basically a unit of seigneurial taxation and, more often than not occupied by several tenant families, the *manse* was held by occupants *(socii)* who had to produce for the lord the required sums of money and the bushels of corn, the stipulated number of hens, eggs and days of work on

the lords' *demesne*. Thus the *demesne* presupposed the existence of the *manse*. This linkage of the small and middle-sized holdings with big farms is often believed to be basic to the medieval European agrarian production in the first phase of feudalism and seems to have given rise to serfdom which is regarded as the central feature of the mechanism of surplus extraction. Serfdom thus was built into the manorial structure and has been equated with what has been described as the "structured dependence"[32] of the peasantry on the lords.

A comparison of the post-Gupta economic scene with the European picture, though made difficult by the nature of the Indian source material, shows that a donated village or land cannot be equated with the European manor.[33] In India the gifted area does not seem to have been divided into anything like *mansus indomicatus* and small-sized holdings to which serfs were attached. Thus the type of relationship and interdependence between the large-sized farms and small or middle-sized plots of land emphasized in the west European context seems to be generally absent in our country. Here instead of serf-occupied *manses*, peasant families themselves became units of production and seigneurial taxation and developed close economic ties of interdependence with the landlord. It may therefore be argued justifiably that production processes in medieval Europe were different from those in early medieval India.

While this obvious dissimilarity may be explained, at least partially, in terms of the contrasting lines of development of agrarian organization in Europe and India,[34] the degree of importance attached to the manorial system itself is often due to the onesided character of contemporary documents which deal almost exclusively with it and not because it was a universal phenomenon throughout the continent. In fact, the manorial organization flourished only in certain parts of western Europe especially in northern France, while in other parts it was partly developed or even unknown. Allodial estates survived even among some of the strongholds of the manorial system[35] and yet historians speak of feudalism in western Europe. The reason for this is to be found not merely in the existence of the manor whose structure gave rise to a specific form of production relation and a surplus exploitation mechanism called serfdom, but also in a generalized subjection of the peasantry in the regions where the organization of agrarian production was qualitatively different. It may thus be suggested that the hallmark of feudalism is not merely the "structured dependence of the entire peasantry on the lords" as a recent critic of Indian feudalism would have us believe[36] but also, and equally importantly, the

different forms of its exploitation—immobility, forced labour, ever increasing burden of dues, etc.—all arising out of the lord's superior rights in land, the evils of subinfeudation and the eviction of tenants.

If the similarity in the forms of exploitation of the peasantry in western Europe and India and not the presence/absence of the manorial structure is accepted as a valid basis for comparison between developments in the two regions, it may be posited, on the basis of epigraphic and literary evidence, that peasants and artisans were at times attached to the soil more or less in the same way as serfs were in medieval Europe. Judging from the epigraphic material, the practice seems to have begun in south India where a third century Pallava grant for the first time speaks of four sharecroppers who remained attached to a plot of land which was given away to the brāhmaṇas.[37] Gradually the practice came to embrace independent peasants. Thus a sixth century grant from the Bijapur district of an early Cālukya king of Badami records a grant of land along with, among other things, *niveśa* (house), which apparently stands for cottages in which the peasants lived. In Orissa and central India the practice seems to have begun in about the sixth century[38] when it appeared also in Gujarat. Although the practice of transferring peasants along with land many have begun first in mountainous and backward regions to meet the problem of the shortage of agricultural labour force,[39] it seems to have been fairly common in several parts of India around the eighth century, as may be gleaned from repeated reference to it in a Chinese account of AD 732.[40] Some Indian literary texts also give the impression that the practice came into wide vogue in the second half of the first millennium.[41] Although the correlation of the literary testimony with epigraphic evidence will furnish a clear picture of the chronological and geographical limits of the practice, it seems to have continued in certain areas even after the first millennium AD. Several epigraphs from Karnataka and south India, for example, indicate that donations of land or village were often accompanied by transfer of peasants and artisans.[42] Recent research has shown that even where there is lack of clear evidence of making the cultivators stick to the soil in specific cases of land transfer, the general tendency was to impose restriction on their personal freedom and mobility.[43]

Whether or not restrictions on peasant freedom / mobility generated the same kind of social relations as was inherent in European serfdom, there is evidence to suggest that the inhabitants of the gifted village were often subjected to forced labour in the areas where they were made to stick to the soil —a fact which reminds us of the medieval European practice of

making the villains work for their lord. Inscriptions indicate that *viṣṭi*, levied mainly from the slaves and hired labourers in the Maurya period, brought all classes of subjects in its ambit and by the fifth-sixth centuries it spread from Kathiawar to Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka and south India.[44] Although north Indian inscriptions belonging to the dynasties of the Paramāras, Cālukyas, Cāhamānas, Gāhaḍavālas and the Candellas do not refer to the practice of forced labour, there are reasons to believe that it did not die out altogether after AD 1000. In fact, we have epigraphic evidence to show its continuance in Karnataka,[45] and its becoming fairly popular in most of the parts of Tamil Nadu during the Coḷa period.[46] Regional variations apart, *viṣṭi*, like serfdom, seems to have continued throughout the early medieval period and even later in India, though neither was present at all places throughout the country. What, however, seems likely that here, compared to Europe, forced labour was less common. In other words, the incidence of labour rent, a prominent feature of European feudal economy, was possibly less in India—a fact which can be explained, to a certain extent, by the varying agrarian organizations prevailing in the two regions.[47]

Although the incidence of forced labour, which was the principal form of seigneurial exploitation in European feudal economy, may have been comparatively less in India, being generally confined to areas which yield clear evidence of serfdom, the Indian peasantry was subjected to an ever increasing burden of rent in kind and to some extent, in cash. This is evident from a large number of land charters which provide often very detailed list of fiscal exemptions *(parihāras)* granted to the donees in both north and south India.[48] A Vākāṭaka record śpecifies 14 *parihāras* and states that the grant is accompanied by all kinds of immunities *(sarvajātiparihāraparitañca)*.[49] Although most dues mentioned in the Vākāṭaka list may have been irregular contributions in the form of provisions, there is little doubt that the Gupta period saw the imposition of several new taxes (e.g.,*udranga*, *uparikara*, *halikākara*, etc.). In the post-Gupta period, the Pāla records specify only a few taxes but leave clear room for the imposition by grantees of fresh imposts on the villagers. They repeatedly refer to the obligation of paying all dues *(samastapratyāya)* to the donee, who, in the absence of clear stipulation about each of them, could always extract more than may have been due from the peasants. Similarly, the Pratihāras transferred all sources of revenue *(sarvāyasameta)* often without naming them. What is more, in some of the Pratihāra documents from Rajasthan, the villagers were required to pay proper and improper, fixed and unfixed dues to the

beneficiary[50]—a practice which is borne out later by the Candella[51] and the Gāhaḍavāla records.[52] The latter list as many as 15 taxes out of which one, *turuṣkadaṇḍa*, may have been levied in times of emergency and at least 10 appear to be regular taxes, not mentioned in earlier inscriptions.[53] The impression of an increasing burden of feudal rent during early medieval times is also supported by several contemporary literary texts.[54] In south India too, a similar trend is noticeable. Thus whereas the number of *parihāras* in an early Pallava charter is stated to be 18, the Valurpalaiyam plates of the time of Pallava king Naṇdivarman III mention as many as 22 of them as being granted along with the land to the god Mahādeva.[55] A recent study, based on the Tamil inscriptions of the Coḷas, shows that no less than 27 taxes were transferred to the donees in the heartland of their empire between the ninth and the thirteenth centuries.[56] The increased burden of rent in the Coḷa kingdom is also evident from the fact that one of the longest, if not the most exhaustive, lists of *parihāras* attached to a *devadāna* land is found in an inscription issued in the eighth year of the Coḷa Rājarāja I (AD 1012-44) where no less than 50 of them are enumerated.[57] Again, the number of revenue terms mentioned in the Hoysaḷa records is much larger than in the Coḷa epigraphs.[58] Thus, although our sources are too discontinuous, widely dispersed and unevenly utilized to give a precise idea of the amount of surplus extracted by the landed intermediaries, rummaging through the vast mass of epigraphic material one gets the unmistakable impression that the economic burden on the peasantry kept on increasing in the six or seven centuries following the age of the Guptas.[59]

We have no means to ascertain whether or not the rise in feudal rent was owing to the agrarian expansion and the possibly resultant increase in agricultural production.[60] But there is little doubt that the collection of rent in India, like Europe, was often linked with the donees' right of subinfeudation and eviction. The available epigraphic material reveals that in several parts of north India (e.g., Malwa, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Maharashtra) the practice of subinfeudation implying the right to eject the cultivators was established from the fifth to the twelfth centuries which may have led not only to an oppressive collection of rent but also to reducing the permanent tenants to the position of tenants-at-will.[61] The south Indian epigraphs even provide actual examples of eviction of peasants from the land.[62] Though in the absence of an intensive region-wise analysis of land charters it is difficult to form a clear idea of the precise areas in which eviction was resorted to, it has been rightly argued that it

may have been typical of the pockets which were settled and did not face any shortage of agrarian labour and presented a contrast to the thinly populated backward regions marked by the practice of attaching peasants and artisans to the land.

The oppressive rent was often accompanied by the gradual undermining of the communal rights over land in donated areas—a trend which is seen in various parts of the country throughout the second half of the first millennium. Already in the Gupta period, the Vākāṭaka grants begin to refer to the transfer of rights to the enjoyment of mines, hides and pasturage. But in the post-Gupta period the practice spread to eastern India, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Gujarat. This is clear from the Pāla and Prathihāra records which refer to the transfer to the donee of all agrarian rights such as the use of pasture grounds, fruit trees, reservoirs of water, bushes and thickets, forests, barren land, lowland, etc. Although in the absence of a detailed examination of inscriptions it is difficult to postulate that similar agrarian rights were transferred to the donees in all parts of south India, there is clear indication that in the Coḷa period communal ownership came to be weakened. A recent statistical analysis of personal names in 3543 Tamil Coḷa inscriptions thus indicates that the village community was being gradually deprived of its autonomy by the local chiefs and landed intermediaries.[63] It is likely that the weakening of the communal control over land in course of time may have reinforced the economic bondage of the peasantry.

It would then appear that from the Gupta period onwards the Indian peasantry was subjected to a surplus extracting mechanism which, apart from being different from that of the preceding period, manifested itself in various forms in different regions of the country. In backward areas where there was dearth of labour force, peasants and other producing classes were attached to the soil and were required to perform free labour service for the landlord; and although serfdom may not have struck deep roots the general restrictions on their mobility reduced them to the position of semi-serfs. In thickly populated areas they suffered the evils of subinfeudation, and living under the constant threat of eviction, were reduced to the position of tenants-at-will. In most parts of the country, however, they were made to pay to the lord an ever-increasing amount of dues in the form of rent. One can notice a degree of unevenness in the growth of these various forms of exploitation in relation to time and space, though one cannot doubt their existence at different points of time at various places during the first millennium and the early centuries of the second. Nor can one miss the

clear resemblance between the forms of surplus-extraction prevalent in India and feudal Europe, notwithstanding the importance of production based on peasant household unit in the Indian situation, which apparently has given rise to the belief, even among some Marxists, that to study Indian society from the vantage point of European feudalism is a case of misguided application.[64]

In spite of the unassailable evidence of the subjection of peasantry to the landlords, recently in an attempt to present an alternative to Indian feudal model, it has been postulated that the ancient and medieval agrarian history of India was characterized by predominantly free peasantry which not only had "complete" control over the means of production but also enjoyed autonomy of production because it controlled the process of production.[65] But the available data reveal that in early medieval times the theory of royal ownership of land became sufficiently strong so as to enable the kings/chiefs to make land or village donations on a large scale to priests and officers who, in turn, derived ownership rights from their benefactors. This led to the development of graded land rights and naturally minimized the possibility of ordinary peasants owning land. Similarly, the economic demands made by landed intermediaries, which is amply borne out by inscriptions, must have conditioned the process of agrarian production and militated against peasant freedom.[66] Ignoring all this, however, it has been contended that the free peasant production together with the high fertility of land[67] and low subsistence level engendered "relative stability" of India's socio-economic system, thus ruling out any change in the "means, methods and relations of production" for two thousand years or so.[68] In this unchanging milieu the state is thought of as the chief instrument of exploitation to the total exclusion of landed intermediaries whose emergence as a powerful exploiting class is no longer in doubt. Except for the hydraulic factor which is not (or cannot be) emphasized in view of the high degree of importance attached to soil fertility, the perception of pre-colonial Indian society in terms of the free peasantry construct seems to be taking us remarkably close to the AMP, characterized, among other things, by changelessness, expropriation of the agrarian surplus solely by the state and the absence of intermediate classes, etc. Based on a skimpy familiarity with the primary evidence, the effort to jettison the feudal model altogether fails to reckon with the logic implicit in the sources, and amounts to bringing in through the backdoor the concept of AMP and even legitimizing, under a radical camouflage, the perception of pre-colonial Indian society as stagnant.

Assuming then that the Indian society in later part of the first millennium was developing feudal traits, the basic question that arises is: Did the feudal mode of production in India have any built-in dissolvents or it underwent transformations only through external stimulus? The Indian Marxist exponents of feudalism have tried to show that the classical feudal system in most parts of India, particularly central and western India, tended to decline after AD 1000 when the progressive role of land grants in opening up new areas to cultivation was exhausted in Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Malwa and Gujarat. Forced labour, an important feature of feudalism, is not at all mentioned in the records of the north Indian dynasties like those of the Paramāras, Cālukyas and Cāhamānas which ruled after AD 1000, though Pāla and Sena inscriptions speak of *sarvapīḍā* (which seems to include forced labour) and some Kalacuri records occasionally refer to *viṣṭi*. On the basis of the *Rājatarańgiṇī* it has been argued that forced labour could be commuted by money-payment. The commutation of labour service into cash payment was possible, we are told, on account of the revival of foreign trade with the Arabs and the Chinese, resulting in the growth of internal trade and towns and the revival of money-economy[69] thus disturbing the earlier economic self-sufficiency. While the available historical evidence does indicate an increased volume of both foreign and internal trade and the greater use of coins around and after AD 1000, it should not be forgotten that trade had not disappeared completely in the centuries following the Gupta rule.[70] The concept of a self-sufficient economy cannot and should not be visualized in absolute terms. It is a relative concept and so is the rise of money economy and trade.[71] It is therefore not possible to explain the growth and decline of a social system on the basis of trade. Moreover, although commercial and urban revival[72] and increased use of money seem to have become an all-India phenomenon, *viṣṭi* does not seem to have fallen into desuetude throughout the country. In Tamil Nadu, for example, the Coḷas, who had flourishing trade contacts with the outside world, issued a large number of coins and yet in their Tamil inscriptions alone we come across as many as 107 clear references to forced labour *(viṭṭi)*.[73] Thus it is difficult to establish a causal relationship between the growth of trade and the decline of forced labour.

It may be further pointed out that the developed phase of India's trade with the outside world in the two centuries preceding the Turkish conquest seems to coincide with the intensification of the practice of making land grants leading to the growth of landed intermediaries, thus severing the direct ties between the state and the peasantry, especially in south India where, in addition to the much larger number of land grants from the Coḷa

period onwards, we have also evidence to prove that village community was fast losing its autonomy—a process which may have facilitated the rise of feudal property.[74] In Karnataka we have much evidence of trade and merchant guilds after AD 1000 side by side with the growth of landed intermediaries[75] and in Kerala, where trade flourished throughout the Middle Ages and later, we notice the development of *jenmi* system only after AD 1000. In the face of the growth of landed intermediaries it is difficult to argue that restrictions on peasant freedom and mobility became less stringent. Moreover, those who maintain that commercial revival in the opening centuries of the second millennium was a major dissolvent of the feudal system ignore the fact that it could have been no more than an external factor which played only a minor role, if at all, in transforming the classical Indian feudal economy and that in spite of growing trade feudal social organization continued to exist in many parts of the country even later, though changes within this system no doubt need to be studied in depth, lest the feudal model in the Indian context should degenerate to the level of a historiographical stereotype.[76]

The commutation of the labour service into money payments and the possible loosening of the restrictions on peasant mobility attributed to the phenomenon of trade, may be treated as symptomatic of a crisis first visible in the earliest descriptions of the Kaliyuga and later in epigraphic records, a crisis which inevitably generated and in course of time sharpened the social cleavage between the landed intermediaries and the peasants. The increase in the volume of rent without necessarily a corresponding rise in the productivity of land and the growing claims of greater rights over land by the rulers and the landed intermediaries[77] not only subjected the peasantry to utmost economic misery but also led to acute tensions between the peasants and their exploiters.[78] Yadava has thus drawn our attention to the literary evidence which indicates the antithesis between the ruling aristocracy and the peasantry and also to the oppression of the latter by the former[79] leading to clash and conflict between the two. An important way of protesting against oppressive dues and services seems to have been that the peasants and ploughmen would either escape from the land or would become mendicants.[80] Sometimes they would even resort to mass desertion.[81] The *Yaśastilaka* relates a story according to which a few poor men who were subjected to forced labour eventually lost their lives when they along with others protested against their master.[82] It is quite likely that the peasants may have sometimes united locally not only for agricultural pursuits but also for protesting against oppression.[83] Not surprisingly, a text refers to a peasant leader who killed people and plundered not only

their property, but also that of temples.[84] In another text we are told that in the Kali age the masters will be greatly troubled by the organization of *bhṛtyas*.[85]

In addition to what has been stated above, we come across, during the second half of the first millennium and later, considerable testimony of actual historical instances of conflict which strengthens our impression that the feudal formation was marked by its own social contradiction, manifesting itself very clearly in the antagonism between the landed aristocracy and the peasantry. Thus the abortive rebellion of the Kaivarttas, earlier viewed as a popular revolt against the tyrannical ruler, has been interpreted as a formidable peasant uprising directed against the Pālas who subjected them to heavy taxes and deprived them of their plots of land given as service tenures.[86] Some of the Ḍāmara revolts in Kashmir referred to in the *Rājataraṅgiṇī* have similarly been taken to be in the nature of peasant movements.[87] Similarly a twelfth century inscription from Ghazipur district (U.P.) records an ordinance issued by the landholders of a village in an abnormal situation created by the turbulent people, possibly peasants.[88]

Although inscriptions from north India do not provide much direct evidence of social conflict, those from the peninsular region furnish clear examples of peasant unrest and protest. If we leave aside a record of the Vākāṭaka Pravarasena II which has been interpreted as an evidence of conflict between ordinary peasants and other social groups,[89] earliest epigraphic testimony of the tension in agrarian society is available from southern Tamil Nadu. Thus the Velvikkuti grant of the early Pāṇḍya Parāntaka Nedunjardaiyan (*c.* AD 767-811) speaks of the loss of the *brahmadeya* in the wake of the Kaḷabhra aggression and the Dalavaypuram plates of another early Pāṇḍya ruler, Parāntaka Vīranārayaṇa (*c.* AD 862-907), clearly refers to the encroachment upon donated village by the śūdras.[90] In the case of Karnataka, it has been suggested, on the basis of an analysis of inscriptions, that conflict between the brāhmaṇas and feudal lords, between brāhmaṇa freeholders of neighbouring villages and between the peasant villages and the feudal lords of whose domain these villages formed a part, surfaced from the twelfth century AD onwards.[91] The situation was not much different in Tamil Nadu where Coḷa epigraphs speak of a dancing girl throwing herself from the temple tower to establish the right of her relations to till the land assigned to her as *jīvitam*, a brāhmaṇa who committed self immolation to establish the rights of the temple servants and of the temple guards who leaped into the flames of a

fire to establish their rights over their *jīvitam* land assignment.[92] Instances of violent protests are also found in south Indian epigraphs of the Coḷa and subsequent periods. A record of the time of Rājarāja III states that a riot took place in the fifth year of his reign when original records of land transfer were destroyed as a result of which the rights of individuals had to be decided according to actual possession of land.[93] Another inscription informs us that a riot between *Iḍangai* (left hand) and *Velangai* (right hand) groups took place in the eleventh year of Kulottuṅga, when the walls of the temple were pulled down, its treasure looted and idol removed.[94] Y. Subbarayalu, on the basis of some Coḷa epigraphs from the Tiruchirapalli district, assignable to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, which saw the crystallization of the *Iḍangai* and *Velangai* social divisions, has suggested that the *Iḍangai* groups were the newly emerging peasants and their coming together posed a serious threat to the old peasants of the locality.[95] It is significant that in the fifteenth century we get indication of new alignments between the two groups. Thus according to the copies of an inscription dated 1429[96] found at Aduthurai (Perambalur taluk) and Kilpaluvur (Ariyalur taluk) the Right Hand and the Left Hand groups decided unanimously not to submit to any outsider even if the *pradāni* (the local Vijayanagara governor), the *Vanniya* (military people) or the *jivitakkārar* (holders of official tenures) coerced them or even if the brāhmaṇa and the *veḷḷala kaṇiyalaṛ* tried to oppress them in collusion with government officers.[97] These records have been taken to imply an open revolt by the lower peasantry against the landlords and the government—a revolt which seems to have spread in several parts of the Coḷa empire.[98]

Although literary texts or inscriptions do not provide many examples of peasant protest either in north or south India, it is striking that instances of both peaceful and violent resistance mentioned in the sources begin to multiply from the eleventh century AD onwards. One may therefore imagine that in the first half of the second millennium the social contradiction between the landed aristocracy and the ordinary peasants, arising out of the increasing economic oppression of the latter as well as out of the scramble for control over agrarian resources, tended to become sharp. This may also have led to important changes in the socio-economic system and may be viewed as the internal dynamic of feudal society, though in the Indian context the role of such a factor is yet to be adequately appreciated.[99]

There is no doubt that during the last two decades or more the use of the feudal model has given a definite direction to the early Indian historiography and has generated an impressive amount of literature,[100] a major bulk

of which is devoted to the study of specific regions, and, has gone a long way in identifying and explaining the basic processes at work in the social and economic life of the people. While scholars have paid considerable attention to the emergence of feudal economy in specific areas within well-defined chronological segments, its possible linkages with changing social structure and with developments in the fields of literature, art, religion, law, etc. have not been sufficiently researched. The study of these dimensions could greatly improve the efficacy of the feudal model for the study of Indian history.

REFERENCES

[1]*Studies in Indian Social Polity; Dialectics of Land Economics in India.* An indirect influence of Marxist ideology is also seen in A.N. Bose, *Social and Rural Economy of Northern India c. 600 BC-AD 200.*

[2]S.A. Dange, *India from Primitive Communism to Slavery.* For a critical evaluation of the book see D.D. Kosambi, "Marxism and Ancient Indian Culture", *ABORI,* XXIX, 1949, pp. 271-77.

[3]Marx first spoke of Asian societies as representing a specific "mode of production". More detailed analysis of the *AMP* is found in his *Grundrisse der Kritk der politischen Okonomic* and *Capital.* His views are also scattered in the series of articles deaiing with contemporary developments in Asia and published in the *New York Daily Tribune.* S. Avineri, *Karl Marx on Colonialism and Modernization* is a compilation of Marx's articles and letters dealing with problems of Asian history and society.

The concept of *AMP* has been at the centre of Marxist debates concerning Asia for more than a hundred years, though it was banned by Stalin from public discussion in the Soviet Union. In the wake of the process of de-Stalinizaion since the mid-fifties there have been in evidence a renewed interest and a notable increase in the theoretical Marxist studies of the *AMP* as well as the empirical analysis of particular historical societies outside Europe.

For different points of view on the *AMP* from Plekhanov onwards see Anne M. Bailey and Josep R. Llobera, eds., *The Asiatic Mode of Production: Science and Politics.* For a useful theoretical discussion of *AMP* also see M. Godelier, "The Notion of the Asiatic Mode of Production in Marx and Engels", *Enquiry,* II, nos. 2 & 3, New Series, 1965, pp. 28-48, 76-102; Eric Hobsbawm, ed., *Precapitalist Economic Formations,* Introduction; R.A.L.H. Gunawardana, "The Analysis of Pre-Colonial Formations in Asia in the Writings of Karl Marx", *IHR,* II, no. 2, 1976, pp. 365-88. Marian Sawer, having analyzed the intellectual and political history of the concept of *AMP,* has argued that it has stimulated "a new heuristic approach to Marxism as a theory of world history" and has strengthened the view

that "history is to be regarded as *prima facie* open, and not as a closed and unitary process governed by innumerable general laws determining its movement towards a single goal" *(Marxism and the Question of the Asiatic Mode of Production).* Lawrence Krader has viewed the *AMP* as part of the succession of historical processes which eventually led to the capitalist mode of production as their outcome and has postulated that it is the stage out of which all modes of European history develop and is thus misnamed: *The Asiatic Mode of Production*, chapter VII. In spite of repeated attempts to revive the concept time and again outside India, Perry Anderson, on the basis of empirical data from India, the Ottoman empire and China, has asserted that the concept should "be given the decent burial that it deserves" *(Lineages of the Absolutist State*, pp. 462-549). Barry Hindess and Paul Hirst *(Precapitalist Modes of Production*, pp. 178-220) have contested the validity of the *AMP* construct on a purely theoretical level without reference to any specific historical society. Speaking of the scattered references to the *AMP* in Marx's writings, Heinz Lubasz has remarked that "the whole topic is a paradise for devotees of textual exegesis" and that it "tells us little of value about Asia or, by extension, about the rest of the non-European world" ("Marx's Concept of the Asiatic Mode of Production: A Genetic Analysis" in Diptendra Banerjee, ed., *Marxian Theory and the Third World*, pp. 107-31). For a more recent critique of the *AMP* in the specific context of India see Brendan O'Leary, *The Asiatic Mode of Production: Oriental Despotism, Historical Materialism and Indian History.*

[4]The writings of Kosambi, Sharma and Romila Thapar generally give an idea of changes in early Indian society. Specific mention of their following writings, however, may be made: Kosambi, "Early Stages of the Caste System in Northern India", *JBBRAS*, XXII, 1946, pp. 33-48; *idem*, "Ancient Kosala and Magadha", ibid., XXVII, 1951, pp. 180-213; *idem*, "The Basis of Ancient Indian History", *JAOS*, LXXXV, 1955, pp. 35-45, 226-37; R.S. Sharma, *Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions in Ancient India*, chapters XVII & XVIII; *idem*, *Perspectives in Social and Economic History of Early India*, chapters 9 and 10. Romila Thapar's articles focusing on social change in early India have been compiled by her in *Ancient Indian Social History*; cf. D.N. Jha, "Social Change in Ancient India", *Economic and Political Weekly*, XIV, no. 35, 1 September 1979, pp. 1499-1500.

[5]R.S. Sharma, "The Socio-Economic Bases of 'Oriental Despotism' in Early India", presented at the seminar on Monarchy and Government—Traditions and Ideologies, 30th International Congress of Human Sciences in Asia and North Africa, 3-8 August 1975, Mexico.

[6]Several studies of early Indian urbanism have been undertaken in recent years. Dilip K. Chakrabarti, "Early Urban Centres in India: An Archaeological Perspective, c. 2500 BC-c. AD 300", D.Phil. thesis, Calcutta University, 1972; *idem*, "Concept of Urban Revolution and the Indian Context", *Puratattva*, VI, 1973, pp. 27-32; *idem*, "Some Theoretical Aspects of Early Indian Urban Growth", ibid., VII, 1974, pp. 74-75; A. Ghosh, *The City in Early Historical India*; Kameshwar Prasad, *Cities, Crafts and Commerce under the Kuṣāṇas*; B.D. Chattopadhyaya,

"Urban Centres in Early Medieval India: An Overview" in S. Bhattacharya and Romila Thapar, eds., *Situating Indian History: For Sarvepalli Gopal*, pp. 8-33; R.S. Sharma, *Urban Decay in India c. 300-c.1000;* Om Prakash Prasad, *Decay and Revival of Urban Centres in Medieval South India c.* AD *600-1200.*

[7]D.D. Kosambi rejects the theory on the basis of the early Indian evidence: "The Basis of Despotism", *The Economic Weekly*, IX, 2 November 1957, pp. 1417-19. R.S. Sharma effectively argues against the theories of the AMP and Oriental Despotism in "The Socio-Economic Bases of Oriental Despotism", op. cit. Among the Indian medievalists who have contested the AMP concept and its ramifications notable is Irfan Habib. See his following articles: "An Examination of Wittfogel's Theory of Oriental Despotism", *Enquiry*, no. 6, Old Series, 1962, pp. 54-73; "Problems of Marxist Historical Analysis", ibid., III, no. 2, New Series, 1969, pp. 52-67; "Classifying Pre-Colonial India", *JPS*, XII, nos. 2 & 3, January/April 1985, pp 44-53. For a critique of the AMP by a leading Indian modernist see Bipan Chandra, "Karl Marx, His Theories of Asian Societies, and Colonial Rule", *Review*, V, 1981, pp. 13-91. The only Indian scholar to openly cling to the model is Diptendra Banerjee whose following articles may be of interest: "In Search of a Theory of Pre-Capitalist Mode of Production" and "Marx and the 'original' Form of India's Village Community" in Diptendra Banerjee, ed., *Marxian Theory and the Third World;* "Marx, Kovalevsky and Medieval India" (mimeographed), presented at the Indian History Congress, 46th session, Amritsar, 1985. In his adherence to the AMP Banerjee ignores the entire corpus of empirical research on early India done by the Indian Marxist historians during the last three decades or so.

[8]S.A. Dange, op. cit.; S.A.Q. Hussaini, *The Economic History of India*, I.

[9]D.D. Kosambi, "On a Marxist Approach to Indian Chronology", *ABORI*, XXXI, 1950, pp. 258-66.

[10]For example, ancient Indian society, unlike the Greek and Roman, cannot be characterized as based on large scale slavery. In India the place of slaves, whose surplus labour could be expropriated, was taken by the members of the śūdra or lowest *varṇa* in older days. But while Kosambi's total rejection of the slave mode of production may be especially true of the Vedic period when the number of slaves was very small and could not have participated in production like their Greek counterparts, one cannot entirely rule out the existence of slaves engaged in economic production from the post-Vedic period onwards, as is evident from Devraj Chanana's analysis of the Buddhist literature, the *Arthaśāstra* and a few Smṛti passages [Chanana, *Slavery in Ancient India*; *idem*, "Ideological Aspects of Slavery in Ancient India", *Journal of the Oriental Institute*, VIII, 1959. Cf., Walter Ruben, ed., *Die Okonomische and Sosiale Entwirklung Indiens*; for writings outside the Marxist framework see U.N. Ghoshal, "Slavery in Ancient India—A Study in India's Social and Economic History" in his *The Beginnings of Indian Historiography and Other Essays*; B.C.Law, "Slavery as Known to Early Buddhists", *Journal of the Ganganath Jha Research Institute*, VI, 1948, pp. 1-10; R.C.

Agrawala, "Position of Slaves and Serfs as depicted in the Kharoṣṭhi Documents from Chinese Turkistan", *IHQ*, XXIX; 1953, pp. 97-110; L. Gopal, "Slavery in Ancient India", *JAHRS*, XXVII, 1961, pp. 70-89]. R.S. Sharma also seeks to argue that slavery was an institution of considerable importance and perhaps played a role in economic production in post-Vedic and Maurya times (*Śūdras in Ancient India*, chapters IV and V; cf. B.N.S. Yadava, "Some Aspects of the Changing Order in India during the Saka-Kushana Age" in B.G. Gafurov *et al*, eds., *Central Asia in the Kushana Period*, II, pp. 123-36).

Thus although both Chanana and Sharma notice elements of slave society in early historical India, neither postulates the existence of large-scale chattel slavery in Indian antiquity; the latter, in fact, has recently characterized ancient Indian society as a vaiśya-śūdra and not a slave society (*Śūdras in Ancient India*, chapter VIII). Outside India the problem of slavery has been a matter of continuing debate and even some Marxists have begun to argue that in most early societies slavery played only a restricted role in the economy as a whole and that the vast mass of labourers were in one sense or another "free": Robert A. Padgug, "Problems in the Theory of Slavery and Slave Societies", *Science and Society*, XI, no. 1, Spring 1976, pp. 3-27.

[11]One of the basic indicators of change in early India emphasized in recent years is the process of acculturation between the *varṇa* society and the tribals living outside the pale of brāhmaṇical ideology—a process through which the agrarian village economy advanced over the tribal mode of life facilitating interaction between the two at various levels. From this point of view the following articles of D.D. Kosambi are of considerable interest: "The Basis of Ancient Indian History", *JAOS*, LXXV, 1955, pp. 35-45, 224-37; "Early Stages of the Caste System in Northern India", *JBBRAS*, New Series, XXII, 1946, pp. 33-48; "Ancient Kosala and Magadha", ibid., XXVII, 1951, pp. 180-213; "The Origin of the Brahmin Gotras", ibid., XXVI, 1951, pp. 21-80; "Brahmin Clans", ibid., LXXIII, 1953, pp. 202-8; "The Study of Ancient Indian Tradition", *Indica*, Silver Jubilee Commemoration Volume, 1953, pp. 196-214; "Living Prehistory in India", *Scientific American*, February 1967; "The Historical Krishna", *The Times of India*, Annual Number, 1965; "Autochthous Elements in the *Mahābhārata*", *JAOS*, LXXIV, 1964, pp. 31-44. Also see S. Jaiswal, *Origin and Development of Vaiṣṇavism*; N.N. Bhattacharyya, *The Indian Mother Goddess*; *idem*, *History of the Śākta Religion*; *idem*, *Ancient Indian Rituals and their Social Content*; *idem*, *History of the Tantric Religion*.

The Marxist historians have not only paid attention to the actual working of the tension-ridden *varṇa* society but have also tried to correlate the technological and material changes with the formation of state systems, modifications in social structure, and development of new religions in certain nuclear regions: R.S. Sharma, *Śūdras in Ancient India*; *idem*, *Material Culture and Social Formations in Ancient India*; *idem*, *Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions in Ancient India*; *idem*, "Kushana Elements in the Gupta Polity" in B.G. Gafurov *et al*, eds., op. cit.,

pp. 117-22; *idem*, "Material Milieu of Buddhism" in Mohit Sen, ed., *Das Kapital Centenary Volume*; *idem*, "Material Milieu of Tantricism" in R.S. Sharma, ed., *Indian Society: Historical Probings*; R. Thapar, *Ancient Indian Social History*. The various aspects of the social formation in ancient south India have also begun to attract the attention of scholars. See, M.G.S. Narayanan, *Aspects of Aryanisation in Kerala*; *idem*, *Reinterpretations in South Indian History*.

[12] *Studies in Indian Social Polity*; *Dialectics of Land-Economics in India*. The word 'feudal' or 'feudalism', often traced to the *feos* occurring in Burgundian charters from about 881, came into a general use during the Enlightenment and the French Revolution when it stood for what appeared to be a body of irrelevant and obnoxious practices inherited from the *ancien regime*. It was, again, during this period that there took place a certain bifurcation in the meaning and uses of the word 'feudal' or 'feudalism'—a bifurcation which has persisted to this day in European historiography and has influenced historical writings elsewhere and to which attention has been pointedly drawn by David Herlihy (*The History of Feudalism*, pp. xiii-xxi). Some historians have thus viewed feudalism as an agglomeration of institutions connected with the support and service of knights and as a system of law, government and of military organization, whose central feature would appear to be administrative decentralization. Indian historians have sometimes been influenced by this concept of feudalism and they have often used feudal terms to describe a situation of parcellized sovereignty. As early as 1923 H.C. Raychaudhari compared the *māṇḍalika rājās* of the time of Bimbisāra with the earls and counts of medieval Europe (*Political History of Ancient India*, p. 184). A.S. Altekar has spoken of the feudatories and feudatory states in ancient India (*State and Government in Ancient India*, pp. 302-8). D.C. Sircar refers to warriors of Karnataka serving the Cālukya and Rāṣṭrakūṭa kings as "feudatory families" (*Studies in the Society and Administration of Ancient and Medieval India*, p. 142). T.V. Mahalingam has identified locally powerful warriors as feudatories paying tribute to the Pallavas in token of their vassalage (*South Indian Polity*, pp. 313, 320-3). L. Gopal seems to equate feudalism with the *sāmanta* system prevalent in India in the second half of the first millennium: "On Some Problems of Feudalism in Ancient India", *ABORI*, LXIV, 1963, pp. 1-32. In all these cases the scholars seem to assume the existence of a decentralized polity as basic to feudalism.

As against the concept of feudalism as a system of government, the school of Marxist historians has equated the feudal phenomenon with a mode of production based on 'feudal rent' which subsumes the existence of a class of landlords (landed intermediaries), a basic class of producers (peasants) with a special connection with the land which, however, remains the property of the former, and of the overwhelmingly self-sufficient agrarian economy with little scope for the functioning of a market system. The study of feudalism within this frame of reference focuses attention on serfdom and various other forms of constraints on peasant freedom. In India these aspects of feudalism have attracted the attention of historians like D.D. Kosambi, R.S. Sharma and B.N.S. Yadava who, however,

have not remained uninfluenced by non-Marxist scholarship. Kosambi, for example, speaks of "feudalism from above" as being the first stage in the development of feudalism in India—a stage which corresponds to the orthodox view of the phenomenon as a system of government. Sharma and Yadava emphasize serfdom, and immobility, subjection, economic bondage and unfreedom of the peasantry, and yet both devote considerable space to feudalism as a system of government: *IF*; chapters II and VI; *SCNI*, chapters 2, 3 and 4.

[13]D.D. Kosambi, *ISIH*, pp. 275-6. For a critical assessment of the two stage theory of Indian feudalism see Irfan Habib's article in *Seminar no. 39: Past and Present.*

[14]R.S. Sharma, "A Survey of Land System in India *c.* 200 BC to AD 650", *JBRS*, XLIV, 1968, pp. 225-34; R.S. Sharma and D.N. Jha, "Economic History of India up to AD 1200 : Trends and Prospects", *JESHO*, XVII, pt. 1, 1974, pp. 48-80.

[15]*IF*, pp. 265-7.

[16]It has been held by sociologists that in circumstances of relative self-sufficiency exchange of goods often takes the form of gift and that such gift has far more than purely economic significance (Marcel Mauss, *The Gift;* Colin Renfrew, "Trade as Action at a Distance: Questions of Interpretation and Communication" in J.A. Sabloff and C.C. Lamberg-Karlovsky, eds., *Ancient Civilization and Trade*, p. 57). Cf. Romila Thapar, "*Dāna* and *Dakshiṇā* as Forms of Exchange" in *Ancient Indian Social History*, pp. 105-21.

[17]B.D. Chattopadhyaya, *Coins and Currency System in South India*, Appendix I.

[18]In the context of European feudalism the Belgian historian Henri Pirenne, writing between the two Wars, argued that the classical world was founded on the unity of the Mediterranean Sea and the flourishing trade which this unity made possible. In the seventh century, however, the Arab followers of Muhammad disturbed this trade as a result of which Europe was thrown back on its own agrarian resources. In the new situation where money revenues were absent, Charlemagne began the practice of supporting his soldiers through grants of land, thus creating the new feudal state and society and giving birth to the Middle Ages. Pirenne's reconstruction of European feudalism has been seriously questioned by later historians and various viewpoints on his thesis may be seen in A.F. Havighurst, ed., *The Pirenne Thesis: Analysis, Criticism and Revision.* There is a striking similarity between Pirenne's reconstruction of the origins of feudalism in Europe and the attempt of Kosambi and Sharma to explain the beginning of the phenomenon in India in terms of the decline of foreign trade and consequent growth of local self-sufficient economy, for which there is sufficient evidence.

[19]The theme of the Kali age was first touched by R.S. Sharma, *Śūdras in Ancient India*, pp. 176, 213-4. It was further discussed by him in his, *Ancient India*, p. 169. For a fuller discussion of the Kali age as a prelude to feudal social formation in India see R.S. Sharma, "The Kali Age: A period of Social Crisis" in S.N. Mukherjee, ed., *India: History and Thought.* Another historian who has shown interest in the

transition to feudalism is B.N.S. Yadava, "Some Aspects of the Changing Order in India during the Saka-Kushana Age" in B.G. Gafurov *et al*, eds., op. cit., pp. 123-36. Yadava has provided a detailed analysis of the concept of Kali age to explain the transition from pre-feudal to feudal society in India: "The Accounts of the Kali Age and the Social Transition from the Antiquity to the Middle Ages", *IHR*, V, nos. 1 & 2, July 1978-January 1979. The idea of Kali age may be equated with that of decadence which seems to have prevailed in late Classical Antiquity. For a percipient historiographical analysis of various aspects of the idea of decadence in Graeco-Roman antiquity see Santo Mazzarino, *The End of the Ancient World.*

[20]B.N.S. Yadava, "Some Aspects of the Changing Order in India during the Saka-Kushana Age", op. cit.; cf. *idem*, "The Accounts of the Kali Age and the Social Transition from the Antiquity to the Middle Ages", op. cit.

[21]Marx never developed the concept of feudal rent as part of the concept of feudal mode of production which was only his secondary concern, but he did elaborate certain pre-capitalist forms of rent in order to illustrate the distinct nature of capitalist ground rent: See *Capital,* III, pp. 614-813. The Marxist position on feudal rent is stated by E.A. Kosminsky according to whom the feudal rent presupposes the existence of a basic class of landlords and of a special type of class of basic producers with a special connection with the land, which remained, however, the property of the ruling class of feudal lords (*Studies in the Agrarian History of England in the Thirteenth Century*, p. vi). Also see Rodney Hilton, ed., *Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism*, p. 30. For a critique of the concept of feudal rent see Hindess and Hirst, op. cit., pp. 221-59.

[22]In the opinion of R.C. Hazra, the description of the *Yuga-dharma* in the *Vāyu* and *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇas* is assignable to AD 200-75 and in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* to the last quarter of the third or the first quarter of the fourth century AD (*Studies in the Purāṇic Records on Hindu Rites and Customs,* pp. 1974-84). The Kali passages in the *Kūrma Purāṇa* are attributed to probably 700-800 AD (ibid., p. 78) and the *Yuga-dharma* section of the *Padma Purāṇa* may be attributed to the first half of the eighth century (ibid., p. 183). The relevant portion of the *Matsya Purāṇa* is considered not later than AD 950 (ibid., p. 177) and that of the *Brahma Purāṇa* is assigned to *c.* AD 900-1200 (ibid., p. 187).

[23]Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra,* III, p. 930. For a detailed discussion of *Kalivarjya* see Batuknath Bhattacharya, *The Kalivarjyas.*

[24]The first clear inscriptional reference to social crisis as envisaged in the earliest Kali descriptions is found in a second century Sātavāhana inscription which credit Gautamīputra Sātkarṇi as putting an end to the confusion between the four *varṇas (vinivatita catuvaṇasākarasa, EI,* VIII, no. 8, l. 60). In the early Pallava charters Viṣṇugopavarman and Siṁhavarman are described as "always ready to extricate *dharma* that had sunk deep owing to the evil effects of the Kali age" (*Kali-yugadoṣāvasannadharmmoddharaṇasannaddho, IA,* V, pp. 50-51; *vinivatita-catuvaṇasakarasa, EI,* VIII, no. 4 (10). Similarly the Talguṇḍa inscription of the early Kadamba king Kakusthavarman refers to Kaliyuga (*EI,* VIII, no. 5, verse 4,

l. 4, p. 34). The tradition of the Kaliyuga continued in later inscriptions as well. In the early Pāṇḍya epigraphs, for example, the evil effects of the Kaḷabhra phase reminded the brāhmaṇas of the Kaliyuga. The Velvikkuti grant of Parāntaka Neḍunjedaiyan describes the Kaḷabhra ruler as *Kali-araiśaṇ* (*EI*, XVII, no. 16, l. 40) and the Madurai inscription of Centan Arikeśari states that the ruler surmounted the Kali through the *mahādānas* (*EL*, XXXVIII, no. 4, ll. 5-6). Also see: Rajan Gurukkal, "Non-brāhmaṇa Resistance to the Expansion of the Brahmadeyas: The Early Pāṇḍya Experience", *PIHC*, 45th Session, Annamalai nagar, 1984, pp. 161-63; *idem*, "The Agrarian System and Socio-Political Organisation under the Early Pāṇḍyas *c.* AD 600-1000." Ph.D. thesis, Jawaharlal Nehru Unversity, 1984.

[25]Amalendu Guha has suggested that in tribal areas there may have taken place a transition directly from tribalism to feudalism. See his articles: "Feudalism in Early Medieval India: Some Comments", mimeographed paper submitted to the seminar on problems of Social and Economic History of India, Advanced Centre of Medieval History, Aligarh Muslim University, 16-20 December 1968; "Tribalism to Feudalism in Assam: 1600-1750", *IHR*, I, no. 1, 1974, pp. 65-76. Cf., Surjit Sinha, "State Formation and Rajput Myth in Tribal Central India", *Man in India*, XLII, no. 1, 1962.

[26]D.C. Sircar admits that in post-Gupta times there was "scarcity" of money but he exaggerates the role of cowries in trade transactions: *Political and Administrative System of Ancient and Medieval India*, pp. 18-19; *idem, Studies in Indian Coins*, pp. 279-88. B.D. Chattopadhyaya, "Currency in Early Bengal", *JIH*, IV, pt. 3, 1977, pp. 41-60, recognizes the relative absence of coins in Bengal from the middle of the seventh to the thirteenth century, though like Sircar, he also thinks that cowrie was the basic element in the currency system of the region throughout its history. For a useful survey of cowrie currency, from literary and epigraphic sources see D.B. Pandey, "Cowrie As a Monetary Token in Ancient India", *JNSI*, XXVIII. S.J. Deyell, *Living Without Silver*, has recently argued against the idea of undermonatization in early medieval times though his arguments have been rebutted by R.S. Sharma (*Metal Money in India*, Third Natheniel Wallich Memorial Lecture, 28-29 October 1988, Indian Museum, Calcutta, unpublished).

The hypothesis of paucity of coins has been strengthened over the years by the writings of L. Gopal (*The Economic Life of Northern India*, pp. 101, 125-34 and chapter IX) and B.N.S. Yadava (*SCNI*, pp. 270-5, 281-3). Recent studies indicate almost total absence of coin-moulds in post-Gupta period: U. Thakur, *Mints and Minting in India*, pp. 161-3; K.K. Thaplyal, *Studies in Ancient Indian Seals*, Appendix C. What is true of most parts of northern India also seems to hold good of south India as is evident from B.D. Chattopadhyaya, *Coins and Currency System in South India*. Even so the hypothesis of the relative scarcity of coins remains largely impressionistic in the absence of any quantitative study the importance of which has rightly been underlined by R.S. Sharma, "Coins and Problems of Early Indian Economic History", *JNSI*, XXXI, 1969, pp. 1-8. For criticism of D.C. Sircar's view that trade did not decline in the post-Gupta period see R.S. Sharma, "Indian Feudalism Retouched", *IHR*, I, n . 2, 1974, pp. 320-30.

In sharp contrast to the general currency situation obtaining in most parts of the country, the Punjab region has yielded a regular series of coins ranging in dates from *c.* AD 650 to *c.* AD 1000—a fact which may partly explain the lack of land grants in the area. But the inverse relationship between the currency in circulation and the land grants as a mode of remunerating priests and officers has still to be worked out on the basis of an area-wise quantitative assessment of coinage during the second half of the first millennium.

[27]D.C. Sircar, *Landlordism and Tenancy in Ancient and Medieval India as revealed by Epigraphical Records*, pp. 32-38.

[28]D.C. Sircar, *Political Administrative Systems*, p. 32. For a discussion of the change in the style and contents of inscriptions from Bengal see Barrie M. Morrison, *Political Centres and Cultural Regions in Early Bengal*, pp. 5-16.

[29]Marc Bloch was one of the most eminent historians to work in the genre of comparative history. His two articles entitled "A Contribution Towards a Comparative History" and "A Problem in Comparative History, the Administrative Classes in France and Germany" in his *Land and Work in Medieval Europe*, give a number of excellent and detailed illustrations of the use of the comparative method in practice. For an elucidation of the logic of comparative history see William H. Sewell Jr., "Marc Bloch and the Logic of Comparative History", *History and Theory*, VI, 1967, pp. 208-18.

[30]Marc Bloch, T*he French Rural History*, pp. 64-77. Georges Duby, *Rural Economy and the Country Life in Medieval West*, discusses in detail the working of the manorial economy and the kind of social relations it gave rise to. For a relatively recent treatment of the *demesne* economy with reference to Poland see Witold Kula, *An Economic Theory of the Feudal System*, pp. 421-75.

[31]*The French Rural History*, pp. 64-77.

[32]Harbans Mukhia, "Was there Feudalism in Indian History?" *JPS*, VIII, no. 3, April 1981, pp. 273-310.

Some non-Marxist economic historians have viewed serfdom in western Europe as "essentially a contractual arrangement where labour services were exchanged for the public good of protection and justice": D.C. North and R.P. Thomas, "The Rise and Fall of the Manorial System: A Theoretical Model", *Journal of Economic History*, XXXI, 1971, p. 778. As against this is the generally acceptable Marxist view of serfdom according to which it was an enforced transfer to the lord of the surplus labour or the product of surplus labour, and amounted to peasant subordination manifesting itself in various forms of peasant obligations in different areas at different times. Thus apart from the peasants' attachment to the soil, labour services would appear to be a basic feature of serfdom in the early phase of west European fedualism.

But one cannot take a static view of serfdom, which has to be viewed as a surplus-extracting relationship changing over time. Not surprisingly by the 12th century labour services tended to disappear as the main form of feudal rent and came to be replaced by new forms of seigneurial exaction. Lenin attaches greatest

importance to forced labour or *corvée* in his analysis of serf-run economy: *Development of Capitalism in Russia, Collected Works*, III, pp. 191-3. Marc Bloch traces the evolution of peasant subjection the chief form of which is labour service rendered to the lord: *The French Rural History*, pp. 102ff; "Rise of Dependent Cultivation and Seigneurial Institutions" in *Cambridge Economic History of Europe*, I, second edn., pp. 235-90. Georges Duby underlines the importance of labour services at the beginning of the 10th century, though according to him the great estates were not making full use of the labour forces they were able to command: *The Early Growth of the European Economy*, pp. 87-88. But the general trend of the Marxist debate in recent years has been not to rigidly equate serfdom with labour services. For a recent restatement of the Marxist position see Rodney Hilton, ed., *Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism*, Introduction, pp.14-17.

[33]Harbans Mukhia is critical of R.S. Sharma for visualizing "the development in India of almost all components of west European feudalism-serfdom, manor, self-sufficient economic units, the feudalisation of crafts and commerce, apart, of course, from declining trade and urbanisation" [Was there Feudalism in Indian History?", op. cit., p. 285]. While it is unfair to blame Sharma for producing empirical evidence indicating similar developments in India and Europe, Mukhia himself is guilty of reading in Sharma more than his words about the existence of manor in India would mean. At one place in his *Indian Feudalism* (first edn., p. 74) Sharma says: "*agrahāras* or villages granted to brāhmaṇas bear *some resemblance* to manor, for in some cases the beneficiaries enjoyed the right of levying forced labour of all varieties on their tenants" [emphasis added]. Obviously what is being implied here is not the structural identity of the *agrahāra* and the manor but the similarity of a particular form of exploitation common to both. This is also the underlying assumption of Sharma's another statement: "...only villages donated to the brāmaṇas could *perhaps* be regarded as such" (ibid., p. 271) [emphasis added]. Mukhia thus misconstrues Sharma's statements to prove his point. His lack of respect for the norms of historiographical propriety is, in fact, quite evident when, in the context of the decline of Graeco-Roman slavery, he speaks of its "increasingly uneconomic" character (*JPS*, VIII, no. 3, April 1981, p. 275) and cites, in his support, the testimony of M.I. Finley (*The Ancient Economy*, pp. 85-87 cited in ibid., p. 296, fn. 10) who seems to be arguing to the contrary.

[34]The pre-feudal western Europe provides ample evidence of large-sized farms (*latifundia, villa*) cultivated directly by their owners with the help of gang slaves, which were the precursors of the medieval manor (Perry Anderson, *Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism*, second edn., p. 59; cf. Pierre Dockes, *Medieval Slavery and Liberation*, pp. 48-114). In contrast to this, Indian references to big farms worked by slaves are few, confined mainly to the *Arthaśāstra* and the *Jātakas* and probably located in the middle Gangetic basin. This may explain the general absence of the manorial system in India.

[35]B.H. Slicker van Bath, *The Agrarian History of Western Europe*, p. 40; Perry Anderson, *Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism*, pp. 154-56.

[36]The perception of feudalism as based on the "structured dependence of the entire peasantry on the lord" (*JPS*, VIII, no. 3, April 1981, p. 276; ibid., XII, nos. 2 & 3, January/April 1985, p. 233) does not carry conviction if we take a comparative view of the typological variations of the feudal formation in different parts of medieval Europe; for it is based on the wrong assumption of the prevalence of the manorial system regardless of its spatial and temporal specificities. Cf. R.S. Sharma, "How Feudal was Indian Feudalism", *JPS*, XII, nos. 2 & 3, January/April 1985, p. 33.

[37]*IF*, p. 54. For a recent assessment of the relevant evidence by R.S. Sharma see his paper "How Feudal was Indian Feudalism?", op. ct., pp. 30-33. When Mukhia asserts that on the question of serfdom R.S. Sharma takes 'ambivalent positions' (*JPS*, XII, nos. 2 & 3 , p. 235), he evidently misses the point that the latter does not use the term 'serfdom' in the Indian context always strictly in the sense in which it is used in Europe where it characterized the structure of the manorial economy.

[38]*IF*, pp. 55-7. [39]Ibid., p. 57.

[40]Ibid., pp. 58-59; R.S. Sharma, "Indian Feudalism Retouched", op. cit.

[41]For a discussion of literary evidence of restrictions on peasant mobility see B.N.S. Yadava, "Immobility and Subjection of Indian Peasantry in Early Medieval Complex", *IHR*, I, no. 1, 1974, pp. 18-27.

[42]Quite a few inscriptions from Karnataka and adjoining regions referring to grant of land along with houses or hamlets may be interpreted to indicate the transfer of inhabitants to the donee along with the donated land or village: *EC* (revised edn.), I, chapters 232, 306, p. 96; VI, Kr. 39, p. 80. M. Liceria had discussed at length the prevalence of the practice of attaching peasants and artisans to the soil in Karnataka in "Social and Economic History of Karnataka *c.* AD 1000-1300." Also see her article "Emergence of Brāhmaṇas as Landed Intermediaries in Karnataka (AD 1000-1300)", *IHR*, I, no. 1, 1974, pp. 31-4.

[43]B.N.S. Yadava, "Immobility and Subjection of Indian Peasantry in Early Medieval Complex", op. cit.; *SCNI*, pp. 163-73.

[44]Varāhamihira (6th century) for the first time refers to a section of workmen known as *viṣṭikara* or *viṣṭikṛt* (*Brihajjātaka*, 18.11, 18.18, 21.7, cited in B.N.S. Yadava, "The Accounts of the Kali Age...", op. cit., p. 56.) While Yadava has drawn our attention to the literary evidence of the use of forced labour in agriculture (*The Problems of the Emergence of Feudal Relations in Early India*, Presidential Address, Section I, Indian History Congress, 41st session, Bombay, 1980), the very fact that in a good number of inscriptions the right to *viṣṭi* is transferred to the donees implies that they may have compelled ordinary inhabitants to work in their fields. Cf., G.K. Rai, "Forced Labour in Ancient and Early Medieval India", *IHR*, III, no. 1, 1976, pp. 16-42; *idem*, *Involuntary Labour in Ancient India*, chapters 4 and 5.

[45]*EC* (revised edn.), I, 87; Y 1.13, 163; VI, Kr. 39.

[46]N. Karashima and B. Sitaraman, "Revenue Terms in Chola Inscriptions", *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 5, 1972, pp. 87-117.

[47]See *supra*, note 34.

[48]Oppressive taxation appears to be an important feature of the Kaliyuga: R.S. Sharma, "The Kali Age...", op. cit.

[49]D.N. Jha, *Revenue System in Post-Maurya and Gupta Times*, pp. 129-30.

[50]*IF*, p. 265. [51]*SCNI*, p. 290.

[52]Ibid. [53]Ibid.

[54]This is evident from Yadava's discussion of the evidence from the *Lekhapaddhati, Prabandhacintāmaṇi, Rās Mālā, Prabandhakośa* and other texts; *SCNI*, pp. 294-5.

[55]D.N. Jha, "Temples as Landed Magnates in Early Medieval South India (*c.* AD 700-1300)" in R.S. Sharma, ed., *Indian Society: Historical Probings*, p. 212.

[56]N. Karashima and B. Sitaraman, op. cit., p. 91.

[57]D.N. Jha, "Temples as Landed Magnates...", op. cit., p. 212.

[58]J.D.M. Derrett, *The Hoysaḷas*, pp. 193-202.

[59]The computation of the rate of exploitation of the peasantry in feudalism has been attempted by several historians and R. Rodolsky, "The Distribution of the Agrarian Product in Feudalism", *Journal of Economic History*, XI, no. 3, Summer 1951, pp. 247-65, discusses the various approaches to the problem. The efforts in this direction have been hitherto largely inhibited by the lack of adequate quantitative material: G. Duby, "The Manor and the Peasant Economy" in his *The Chivalrous Society*, pp. 186-8. In the case of early India the absence of quantitative data is felt more acutely and at the present state of our research one cannot venture to present anything more than an impressionistic picture of peasant exploitation.

[60]It is quite probable that the ever increasing number of land grants led to the extension of agriculture in various parts of the country. Attention has also been drawn to the introduction of several new crops on the basis of some early medieval texts, notably *Kṛṣiparāśara*: *IF*, pp. 251-3; L. Gopal, "Techniques of Agriculture in Early Medieval India (*c.* AD 700-1200)", *University of Allahabad Studies*, 1963-64, pp. 1-37. B.D. Chattopadhyaya has similarly indicated the increasing importance of *araghaṭṭa* and its possible role in augmenting agricultural production: "Irrigation in Early Medieval Rajasthan", *JESHO*, XVI, pts. 2-3, 1973, pp. 298-316. But in the absence of any systematic study of early Indian agricultural history it is difficult to establish a definite correlationship between agrarian production and feudal rent.

[61]*IF*, p. 266.

[62]D.N. Jha, "Temples as Landed Magnates...", op. cit., pp. 212-3.

[63]N. Karashima and Y. Subbarayalu, "A Statistical Study of Personal Names in Tamil Inscription", *Computational Analysis of Asian and African Languages*, no. 3, March 1976, p. 15; also see Karashima *et al, Concordance*, Appendix 3; Karashima, "Allur and Isanamangalam", *IESHR*, II, 1965, pp. 150-1. Cf., T.V. Mahalingam, "Village Communities in South India", *Transaction of the Archaeological Society of South India*, I, 1955, pp. 33-46.

[64]In the writings of Karl Marx, feudalism, unlike capitalism, is not viewed as a world system or a universal phenomenon. But there is little doubt that historical research over the years has shown it to be a widespread social formation, notwithstanding the considerable variation in its precise forms in different countries. Thus although the closest parallel to fully developed European feudalism may be said to have existed in Japan, in other countries the parallelism may be less close: Eric Hobsbawm, "From Feudalism to Capitalism" in Rodney Hilton, ed., *The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism*, pp. 158-9.

[65]Harbans Mukhia, "Was there Feudalism in Indian History?", op. cit., pp. 273-310. The idea of free peasantry is not much different from the neo-populist Chayanovian concept of peasant economy which Burton Stein has applied to the study of medieval south India (*PSS*), though Mukhia very recently seems to have lost his original enthusiasm for it as can be inferred from his statement: "I realize that the case (for the free peasantry) had probably been overstated, if unintentionally", *JPS*, XII, nos. 2 & 3, January/April 1985, p. 242. For a detailed criticism of Mukhia see R.S. Sharma, "How Feudal was Indian Feudalism?", ibid., pp. 19-43. Cf., D.N. Jha, "Relevance of 'Peasant State and Society' to Pallava-Coḷa Times" in N. Karashima, ed., *Indus Valley to Mekong Delta*, pp. 103-39, for critical comments on Stein's characterization of medieval south Indian economy as peasant economy. See *infra*, chapter 7.

[66]For a recent reappraisal of the relevant evidence see R.S. Sharma, "How Feudal was Indian Feudalism?", op. cit.; *idem*, "From Gopati to Bhūpati", *Studies in History*, II, no. 2, 1980, pp. 1-10.

[67]Mukhia's generalization that soil in ancient and medieval India was very fertile completely ignores the spatial and temporal variation and is buttressed with the help of a few mutually unrelated textual references to the harvesting of two or three crops, spread over two millennia (*JPS*, VIII, no. 3, p. 303, fns. 124-27). If one were to adopt Mukhia's method, it would not be difficult to produce far more substantial evidence of recurrent famines and drought to prove just the opposite point of view. Needless to emphasize then that the argument based on the supposed high fertility of land throughout the pre-colonial period of Indian history is misconceived. Cf. Stein, "Politics, Peasants and the Deconstruction of Feudalism in Medieval India", *JPS*, XII, nos. 2 & 3, January/April 1985, pp. 57-58.

[68]Ibid., VIII, no. 3, April 1981, p.292.

[69]*IF*, pp. 242 ff; *SCNI*, p. 287.

[70]L. Gopal, *Economic Life in Northern India*, chapters VI & VII.

[71]Marc Bloch, "Natural Economy and Money Economy: A pseudo-dilemma", in *Land and Work in Medieval Europe*, pp. 230-44; M.M. Postan, "The rise of money economy" in *Essays on Medieval Agriculture and General Problems of Medieval Economy*, pp. 28-40.

[72]For commercial and urban revival in north India see *IF*, pp. 244 ff; *SCNI*, pp. 275-84; V.K. Jain (*Trade and Traders in Western India*) and B.D.Chattopadhyaya ("Markets and Merchants in Early Medieval Rajasthan", *Social Science Probings*,

II, no. 4, December 1985, pp. 413-40) provide evidence of the revival of trade in western India. K.A. Nilakanta Sastri (*The Coḷas*, chapter XXII), G.R. Kuppuswamy (*Economic Conditions in Karnataka, AD 973 - AD 1336*, pp. 110-18), and Kenneth R. Hall (*Trade and Statecraft in the Age of the Coḷas)* give an idea of the revival of commerce in south India. Om Prakash Prasad (op. cit.) speaks of urbanism in early medieval Karnataka.

[73]Karashima and Sitaraman, "Revenue Terms in Chola Inscriptions", op. cit., p. 91.

[74]Karashima and Subbarayalu, "A Statistical Study of Personal Names in Tamil Inscriptions", op. cit.; Karashima, "Allur and Isanamangalam", op. cit.

[75]R.N. Nandi, *Growth of Rural Economy in Early Feudal India,* Presidential Address, Section I, Indian History Congress, 45th Session, Annamalainagar, 1984.

[76]In 1974 Amalendu Guha spoke of the transition from tribalism to feudalism in Assam during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: "Tribalism to Feudalism in Assam: 1600-1750", *IHR*, I, no. 1, March 1974. Two years later N. Karashima's empirical study indicated the resemblance between the Vijayanagara *nāyakas* and the European feudal lords: "Nāyakas and Leaseholders of Temple Lands", *JESHO*, XIX, no. 2, 1976. Both studies, based as they are on the relevant primary source material, are dependable. It was therefore not by 'a sleight of hand' that in 1979 the present writer had suggested the survival of feudalism in the later centuries of the Middle Ages: D.N. Jha, *Early Indian Feudalism: A Historiographical Critique,* Presidential Address, Section I, Indian History Congress, 40th session, Waltair, 1979. For more recent empirical studies of feudalism in post-thirteenth century period see N. Karashima, "Nāyaka Rule in North and South Arcot Districts in South India during the Sixteenth Century", *Acta Asiatica*, no. 48, March 1985, pp. 1-26; H. Kotani, "The Vatan system in the 16th-18th century Deccan-Towards a New Concept of Indian Feudalism" (ibid., pp. 27-50). This particular issue of the *Acta Asiatica* contains two more articles dealing with later medieval period and having considerable bearing on the question of later phase of Indian feudalism.

[77]*SCNI*, pp. 250ff.

[78]Yadava, "Problems of the Interaction between Socio-Economic Classes in The Early Medieval Complex", *IHR*, III, no. 1, July 1976, pp. 50-51.

[79]Ibid. [80]Ibid., pp. 53-54. [81]Ibid.

[82]Ibid. [83]Ibid. [84]Ibid.

[85]Ibid. [86]*IF*, p. 268.

[87]Yadava, "Problems of Interaction between Socio-Economic Classes in the Early Medieval Complex", op. cit., p. 55; cf. D.D. Kosambi, "Origin of Feudalism in Kashmir", *JBBRAS*, Sardhaśatābdi Commemoration Volume (1956).

[88]*EI*, XXXII, no. 36.

[89]Raghavendra Vajpayi, "Socio-Economic Tensions in Bhojakaṭa Rājya of Vākāṭaka Kingdom in the Time of Pravarasena II", *PIHC*, 45th session, Annamalainagar, 1984, pp. 139-47.

[90]Cited in Rajan Gurukkal, "Non-Brāhmaṇa Resistance to the Expansion of Brahmadeyas: The Early Pāṇḍya Experience", op.cit., pp. 161-63. For a detailed discussion see *idem*, "The Agrarian System and Socio-Political Organisation under the Early Pāṇḍyas *c.* AD 600-1000", op. cit.

[91]R.N. Nandi, *Growth of Rural Economy in Early Feudal India*, Presidential Address, Section I, Indian History Congress, 45th session, Annamalainagar, 1984. Cf. D.N. Jha, "Relevance of 'Peasant State and Society' to Pallava-Coḷa Times", op.cit.

[92]Vanamamalai, "Consolidation of Feudalism and Antifeudal Struggles during Choḷa Imperialist Rule", *Proceedings of the Second International Conference Seminar of Tamil Studies*, III, Madras, 1968, pp. 242-3.

[93]Ibid. [94]Ibid.

[95]Y. Subbarayalu, "The Peasantry of Tiruchirapalli District from the 13th to 17th Centuries", *Studies in Socio-Cultural Change in Villages in Tiruchirapalli District, Tamil Nadu, India*, Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, Tokyo, March 1933, pt. 1, pp. 25-26.

[96]Ibid., 26-27. [97]Ibid.

[98]Ibid., p. 128. Also see H.D. Raju Kumar, "Protest Against Heavy Taxation", *The Hindu*, 28 February 1978.

[99]In the case of late medieval Europe the role of class conflict in the long-term evolution has been stressed and Robert Brenner, "Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in pre-Industrial Europe", *Past and Present*, no. 70, February 1976, pp. 30-76, has argued that the crisis of European feudalism lay in the class relationship obtaining in the Middle Ages. For different views on Brenner thesis see *Past and Present*, nos. 78-80. A seminal contribution to the debate, however, remains. Guy Bois, *The Crisis of Feudalism*. Also see T.H. Aston and C.H.E. Philpin, eds., *The Brenner Debate*.

[100]Efforts have been made to explain the changes in early medieval Indian social structure, religion and art against the backdrop of a feudal social formation. See for example, R.S. Sharma, *Social Changes in Early Medieval India (c. AD 500-1200)*; *idem*, "An Approach to Astrology and Divination in Medieval India" in H. Kruger, ed., *Neue Indienkunde* (Festschrift Walter Ruben zum 70, Geburtsag), pp. 51-6; *idem*, "Material Milieu of Tantricism" in R.S. Sharma, ed., *Indian Society: Historical Probings*; Yadava, *SCNI*, chapter 1; R.N. Nandi, *Religious Institutions and Cults in the Deccan (c. AD 600-1000)*; Devangana Desai, "Art under Feudalism in India", *IHR*, I, no. 1, 1974, pp. 10-17; *idem*, *Erotic Sculpture in India: A Socio-Cultural Study*. R.S. Sharma has tried to identify the elements of change in various spheres of life and to relate them to feudal developments: "Problem of Transition from Ancient to Medieval in Indian History", *IHR*, I, no.1, 1974, pp. 1-9.

A number of area-wise studies of the early medieval Indian society undertaken in recent years further our understanding of the process of change even if the data have not always been discussed against the background of a feudal mode of production: P. Niyogi, *Brahmanic Settlements in Different Subdivisions of Ancient*

Bengal; Kesavan Veluthat, *Brahman Settlements in Kerala*; M. Momin, "Aspects of Political Institutions and Social Structure in Kamarupa", M.Phil. dissertation, Jawaharlal Nehru University, 1979; M. Santisri, "Brahmanical Settlements in Andhra Pradesh"; M. Phil. dissertation, Jawaharlal Nehru University, 1980; K.N. Ganesh, "Some Aspects of the Agrarian Structure in Early Medieval Venad", M. Phil. thesis, Jawaharlal Nehru University, 1979; Rajan Gurukkal, "The Agrarian System and Socio-Political Organisation under the Early Pāṇḍyas", op.cit.

5

*Feudal Traits of Temples in Early Medieval South India (c. AD 700-1300)**

According to tradition, the first systematic attempt to spread the temple cult in south India was made in pre-Pallava times by King Koccenkanam who is said to have built 78 temples.[1] The archaeological evidence of the large scale construction of temples in the region, however, begins to be available from the time of the Pallavas, especially from the reign of king Mahendravarman I, who seems to have experimented with rock-cut and structural forms of architecture whose best specimens are found at Kanchipuram and Mahabalipuram. The second stage in the growth of massive Hindu temples and religious establishments coincides with the rule of the Coḷas who are credited with the construction of a large number of them.[2] Recent researches have sought to establish a relationship between the development of the *bhakti* movement led by the Nāyanārs and Aḷvārs and the growth of temples and to prove that the Tamil *bhakti* saints were basically leading a temple movement.[3] What, however, needs to be underscored is that the construction of temples on a large scale coincides with the increasing popularity of the practice of making donations of land and other objects without which their maintenance would have been impossible. For example, a random survey of 117 Pallava documents shows that nearly 53 record donations made to temples. Out of these 53, a dozen or more inscriptions refer to gifts of plots of land and whole villages, and about 30 record donation of gold amounting to more than 2000 *kaḷañju*. Livestock, paddy, etc., mentioned in some inscriptions as objects of gift occupy a relatively minor place in the Pallava records.

More consolidated evidence of endowments to temple is available from the period of the Coḷas who succeeded the Pallavas in Tamil Nadu. The total number of Coḷa inscriptions may well be above 10,000 and hence it is not possible to undertake their detailed analysis here. But a limited comparison of the records of the Pallavas and Coḷas gives the impression that the latter certainly donated more liberally to different temples than the

former. Thus at Tirupati only 11 donative records belong to the Pallava period whereas 31 are assignable to the time of the Coḷas. Similarly at Chidambaram, of the 230 inscriptions deciphered so far, not a single comes from the Pallava period, whereas no less than 75 may be assigned to the time of the Coḷas. Of these at least 41, which range in dates from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries, record land endowments to the local temple. Increasing royal patronage to temples during Coḷa times is amply borne out by the Tanjore records which reveal that Rājarāja I (985-1016) alone presented to the Great Temple golden articles weighing 41,557 *kaḷañju* or nearly 484 lbs. and jewels worth 10,000 *pon*, equal to as many *kaḷañju* in gold. He is also said to have donated silver utensils weighing 50,650 *kaḷañju* in all. Several inscriptions record an order of Rājarāja directing specified villages to pay revenue in paddy and gold to the Tanjore temple treasury. Three such records, containing a single order, list 57 villages, located as far away as Ceylon.[4] Not surprisingly, land and village endowments to temples made by the Coḷas outnumber those by the Pallavas, though precise quantitative data on the point remain to be collected.[5] Apart from the imperial rulers, military chiefs and feudatories also made endowments to temples. Epigraphic sources indicate that the Bāṇas, the Muttaraiyars, the Coḷas of Renāṇḍu Uraiyūr and Paḷaiyāṟai, the Koḍumbālūr chiefs and the Adigamāṇas, all feudatories of the Pallavas at one time or another, made gifts of land and other objects to temples. This practice was followed on a larger scale by the feudatories of the imperial Coḷas and the Cālukyas of Kalyāna. Local village and town assemblies, which became an important feature of administrative organization under the Coḷas, seem to have made various kinds of gifts to gods.[6] Endowments by private individuals and merchant guilds accounted for a small part of the wealth which accumulated in the early medieval south Indian temples. The present paper, based on analysis of some Pallava and Coḷa inscriptions, seeks to suggest that the land grants to the temples affected their internal organization and gave them feudal dimensions and does not claim to provide an in-depth examination of all the aspects of the temple movement in south India.

The growth in the economic resources of the temple led to a corresponding increase in the number of persons whose services were required by it. In the Pallava period when gifts in cash and kind were made to the temple on a limited scale it was not possible for it to engage many persons for its maintenance; nor was it necessary owing to the comparatively less complex routine and mode of worship of the deity. During the reign of the Pallava King Parameśvaravarman I (AD 670-80) the Śiva temple at Kūram

was managed by only four persons who offered daily worship to the deity, watered the *maṇḍapam* everyday and recited passages from the *Mahābhārata*. The biggest temple staff (*koyil parivāram*) during the Pallava rule seems to have been that of the Mukteśvara shrine where it numbered 54.[7]

Religious establishments in Coḷa times, however, came to possess much more elaborate personnel for their management.[8] The Tanjore temple records reveal that more than 600 persons were employed in the Rājarājeśvara temple alone. Out of this nearly 400 were dancing girls and no less than 200 were men servants comprising dancing masters, musicians, drummers, tailors, goldsmiths, accountants and so on. Different categories of employees attached to the Tanjore temple seem to have been supervised by a number of superintendents whose existence is borne out by the records. We have definite reference to superintendents of temple women, female musicians, goldsmiths, accountants and so on at the Great Temple.[9] Judging from the number of persons working here and at some other contemporary religious establishments, it may be reasonably suggested that the temple staff tended to expand during the time of the Coḷas. Thus the role of early medieval south Indian temple as a big employer has rightly been emphasized.[10] But in the absence of adequate statistical data relating to different Coḷa temples it is difficult to form a correct idea of the employment opportunities which they may have afforded.

A striking feature of the temple organization from the time of the imperial Pallavas appears to have been the practice of paying in kind to the temple servants for the services rendered to the deity. An inscription of the time of Nandivarman III (AD 844-66) states than in the Śiva temple at Tiruvallam the Śiva Brāhmaṇas received 500 *kāḍi* of paddy. According to another record ascribed to his reign, the local assembly was to pay to the Bilvanātheśvara temple 2,000 *kāḍi* of paddy out of which 600 *kāḍi* were allotted for offerings, 500 for Śiva Brāhmaṇas, 500 for drummers and 400 for those who performed various other functions.[11]

The Coḷa records, apart from referring more frequently than the earlier ones to payment in grain, furnish clear evidence of remunerating temple servants through assignments of land which does not seem to have been common in the preceding period. A deed inscribed in the fifth regnal year of Sundara Coḷa (AD 956-73) on the western wall of the Ādimūleśvara shrine records an endowment of land to the god Mahādeva to provide among other things, for the maintenance of some temple servants.[12] A Tanjore record states that 400 dancing girls were assigned each a *pangu* (share) comprising a house and one *vēli* of land yielding a net revenue of

100 *kalam* of paddy and that about 100 such shares were earmarked for the maintenance of 212 men servants working in the temple in various capacities. An inscription of the fourth year of the Coḷa viceroy Jaṭāvarman Sundara Coḷa Pāṇḍya (eleventh century), son of Rājendra I, from Mannārkoyil (Ambasamudram taluk, Tirunelveli district), records the decision of the local assembly regarding the lands and houses granted to the gardeners, drummers, potters, garland-makers, torch-bearers, etc., working at the temple.[13] According to another Coḷa epigraph one Veḷāṇ Vīranāraṇaṇ endowed a plot of land for the maintenance of four persons who used to sing the Tiruppadiyam hymns to the accompaniment of *uḍukkai* and *tāḷam* daily during the three services in the temple.[14] Numerous other inscriptions of the Coḷa period suggest that the assignment of land for the maintenance of the temple staff was very much in vogue.[15]

The practice of remunerating temple employees in kind or through assignments of land will have to be understood against the general background of the currency situation prevalent in the Coḷa period. In the context of north India a similar phenomenon has been partially linked up with the gradual fall in the volume of India's foreign trade and the consequent decline of money economy.[16] There seems to have been a comparative paucity of coins in most parts of India in the pre-Coḷa period owing to languishing foreign trade. How far this is true of south India during Coḷa times is difficult to ascertain in the absence of any quantitative study of the available contemporary numismatic material. But the growth of south Indian trade with foreign countries from the tenth century onwards and the emergence of a large number of merchant guilds which participated in it may have provided a congenial atmosphere for the development of a stable monetary system. Besides, our sources also unmistakably indicate that more cash donations were made to religious institutions after the Pallavas than during their rule. But two factors seem to have discouraged the use of coins for paying the temple personnel for various services to the deity. In the first place, the Coḷas and other ruling dynasties in south India mostly issued high denomination coins of such metals as gold and silver which could not have been used for ordinary economic transactions. Secondly, the cash donations received by temples from different sources gradually came to be converted into unproductive deposits.[17] Also, it is extremely doubtful whether the little proportion of their money that may have remained in circulation could effectively flow into private economic relations.[18] Thus the practice of paying temple staff through allotments of land may be symptomatic of the growth of feudalism whose essence lay in the organization of the entire social structure on the basis of land.

The feudal trait of the early medieval south Indian temples owes a great deal to *devadāna* gifts of land, which they received from the Pallava period onwards. That these endowments were made in perpetuity may be inferred from the Valurpalaiyam plates of Nandivarman III (AD 844-66) which end with an appeal to future rulers to protect the grants of the village Tirukkāṭṭupaḷḷi to the Śiva temple.[19] The perpetual nature of temple grants came to be further emphasized in Coḷa times, as is indicated by the frequent occurrence of imprecatory verses at the end of the charters.[20] But whether a grant of *devadāna* land necessarily meant the transfer of rights of ownership to the grantee is controversial. Minakshi[21] points out that the Pallava charters do not seem to confer on the temples the right to sell, mortgage or alienate the landed property bestowed upon them; nor do the Coḷa inscriptions state that the rights to sale, mortgage and bequest were granted to the temple authorities, though some of them refer to the transfer of *devadāna* land by one temple to another in lieu of a specified payment. Thus an inscription of an unidentified Coḷa king found in the Koraṅganātha temple at Srīnivāsanallūr of the Musiri taluk (Trichinopoly district) registers a sale of land as a tax-free *devadāna* by the members of the *mūlapariṣad* of Mahendramaṅgalam to the temple of Tirukkurakkuttuṛai-Parumānaḍigal.[22] A deed inscribed in the third year of Gaṇḍarāditya (AD 950-57) on the southern wall of the central shrine of the Nāgeśvarasvāmī temple at Kumbhakonam records a sale of five *vēlis* of land at Arisalūr by the assembly of Tirukkudamukkil to the temple for 500 *kaḷañju* of gold and of another five *vēlis* for 1,000 *kaḷañju*.[23] An epigraph from the same temple issued in the third year of Rājakeśarīvarman states that a quarter portion of a *vēli* of land (*karchey*) was sold by the *mūlapariṣad* of Tirukkudamūkkil to one Aravaṇ Kalaṅgāmalai, a *veḷḷāḷa* resident of Tanjore, who endowed it to another temple for the daily feeding of a *śivayogī*.[24] In the first two cases the land in question was directly sold to the temple, but in the last instance it was sold to a private individual who endowed it to a temple. All the three records indicate that temple land could be disposed of only for religious purposes, though Karashima and Subbarayulu have drawn our attention to some cases of secular land transfers.[25] The general absence of secular land-sale deeds in the Coḷa period, however, should not necessarily mean that the right of the temple to the *devadāna* land was extremely limited in nature. Contrary to this, Karashima, on the basis of a comparative study of the records relating to a *brahmadeya* and a non-*brahmadeya* village of Coḷa times, finds a strong connection between the individual and the land in the former as opposed to a weak one in the latter.[26] In recent years he has analyzed substantial epigraphic material from the lower

Kaveri Valley to show that hereditary possession of land by private individual in *brahmadeya* villages tended to become common during the later phase of the Coḷa period—a proposition which implies that in many cases the transfer of land to temples by individuals may have meant the transfer of the ownership right over land.[27] Our examination of 40 Coḷa donative records inscribed on the Nāgeśvarasvāmī temple of the *brahmadeya* village of Tirukkuḍamūkkil (modern Kumbhakonam) similarly shows that 18 of them record gifts of land to a temple and that 13 of these were made by private individuals.[28] This ties up well with the findings of Karashima. Thus although a detailed statistical study of the epigraphic material relating to different Coḷa *brahmadeya* villages in and around which many temples were situated has yet to be made,[29] the limited available data may imply that the temples which received grants of land practically enjoyed it at will.

It was in keeping with their control over the endowed land that the temples discharged their vital responsibilities towards it. During the Coḷa period, for instance, a series of Srīraṅgam temple inscriptions from the region of Kulottuṅga I (AD 1070-1118) "describe a gigantic process of redevelopment of a large portion of temple lands buried under sand by floods of the Kaveri river".[30] It may, however, be argued that since endowments were made in order to meet the specific requirements stipulated in the gift deeds (e.g., the temple maintenance, festivals honouring the deities, food offering to the deities, feeding of the brāhmaṇas, etc.), the early medieval south Indian temple could not have enjoyed unlimited right over the endowed land or village. This hypothesis may derive strength from several records which refer to royal inquiries into temple accounts. From a thematic and chronological arrangement of relevant inscriptions Spencer has inferred that the investigation of temple accounts was far more common under the Coḷa than uńder other dynasties. He adds that a third of these Cola records belong to the reign of Rājarāja I alone.[31] Evidently royal intervention in the financial affairs of the temple could not have been a standard royal instrument to restrict the rights of the temple over the endowed land.

Temples which became rich landowning institutions in course of time could not have cultivated all their lands directly which perhaps led to the practice of leasing them to tenants. Extant land grants do not clearly indicate that early medieval south Indian temples, like the north Indian donees,[32] had the right to enjoy the land and get it enjoyed, to cultivate it and get it cultivated. But several inscriptions from the Pallava period onwards testify to the fact that they leased out their land to tenants. Thus

a Pallava record from Tirupati states that the temple land was leased out to the husbandmen of the *nāḍu*, presumably to facilitate its proper cultivation and the collection of the lease-produce. But more frequent reference to temple tenants is found in the Coḷa inscriptions which often specify the share which the temple was to receive out of the total produce of the tenanted land. An inscription issued in the thirteenth year of Sundara-Coḷa (AD 957-73) from the Agastyeśvara temple (Trichinopoly district) informs us that the temple authorities assigned 124 *vēli* of *devadāna* land to an individual on the condition that he would measure out 2,880 *kalam* of paddy every year to the temple at the rate of 120 *kalam* per *vēli*.[33] Another charter of the seventeenth year of the same ruler from the Cintāmaṇīśvara temple (Ponneri taluk, Chingleput district) lays down that the tenants were to supply annually a certain amount of oil.[34] Similar evidence is also available from the region of Rājarāja I (AD 965-1016). Thus one Perum.baḷḷi-Koṇdān Sundaram, who is mentioned as a tenant of the Subramanya temple at Tiruviḍaikkoli in an inscription of the ninth year of Rājarāja I, is stated to have given 250 *kalam* out of the yield of five *vēli* of its land which he cultivated. An epigraph from the Somanātheśvara temple at Attur in Tinnevelly district, dated in the 22nd year of the same ruler, registers an endowment of land to the deity by a certain Bhāradvajaṇ Māthava Uḍaiyadivākaran with himself as the tenant, though the condition on which he held it is not known.[35] Still another inscription from Trichinopoly district, issued in the twenty-eighth year of Rājarāja I, seems to record an undertaking given by a tenant to pay a specified quantity of paddy from the temple lands cultivated by him.[36] A clear example of the leasing out of temple land is furnished by a stone inscription from Nagapattinam taluk (Tanjore district) dated AD 1117 which details an allotment of fallow temple land to several persons who were required to bring it under the plough and contribute paddy out of its produce for *śrībali* and other offerings.[37] Similarly, a record of AD 1243 from the Vedāraṇyeśvara temple in the Tanjore district states that one Uyyvavandān donated two plots of land for burning a perpetual lamp to the deity and that it was made over to Śrīkṛṣṇa Bhaṭṭa and others of Anapāyacaturvedimaṅgalam who undertook to maintain the lamp out of the balance left after paying the *kaḍamai* dues.[38] These instances refer to tenants working on plots of land. But obviously the temples must have needed a large number of people to work their land in cases where whole villages were granted to them. Thus it would not be unreasonable to hold that land and village endowments to religious institutions gave rise to feudal agrarian relations leading in turn, as will be shown presently, to the depression of the peasantry.

The decline of the peasantry in early medieval south India may have been caused to a certain extent by the fiscal concessions which accompanied the gifts of land and villages to temples. A comparative study of the available epigraphic material relating to the Pallava and Coḷa periods reveals that the number of such concessions (*parihāras*) increased in course of time. Whereas the number of *parihāras* in the early Pallava records is stated to be 18, the Vēḷūrpāḷaiyam plates of the time of Nandivarman III mention as many as 22 fiscal rights that were granted to the god Mahādeva.[39] One of the longest, if not the exhaustive, lists of *parihāras* attached to a piece of *devadāna* land, however, is found in an inscription issued in the sixth year of Rājendra I (AD 1012-44) where no less than 50 of them are enumerated.[40] Since the *parihāras* indicate exemption from the payment of taxes originally payable to the state and the transfer of various land rights of the king to donees, an increase in their number suggests a correspondingly heavier burden of taxes which the people may have found difficult to pay. An inscription from Tirumāḷam (Tanjore district) dated AD 1112 speaks of the eviction of some tenants from a piece of *devadāna* land on account of the accumulation of arrear of *melvāram* due from them.[41] According to another record of AD 1222 a tenant in occupation of some temple land had to part with it even after the payment of the arrear of taxes due from him.[42] These illustrations leave no doubt that the grant of fiscal privileges with land or village to the temples caused greater economic subjection of the peasants.[43]

The practice of levying fresh imposts from the local inhabitants for the maintenance of temple in Coḷa times may have further contributed to the unhappy lot of peasants. It is stated in a record of AD 922 from Erode that such new cesses as half *paṇam* on each household (*kuḍi*), an eighth of a *paṇam* each from either party to a marriage and one *mañjāḍi* and one *kāśu* of gold from each crematorium were levied from the people of a whole *nāḍu* for providing for the worship of Viṣṇu in a local temple.[44] It is gathered from a Tanjore inscription of the time of Rājarāja that 100 *kāśu* was raised from the local professional and religious groups for making certain necessary endowments to a temple of the place.[45] Still another epigraph of AD 1170 from South Arcot district tells us that the local assemblies decided to raise certain contributions for meeting the cost of services and offerings to the new deity.[46] All this proves that new levies were often collected from the people on the pretext of meeting the requirements of temples. The above dues may have increased the total weight of taxation, though their occasional collection in limited areas

distinguishes them from medieval European monastic tithes which were much more widespread in character.

Although a detailed discussion of the various fiscal terms mentioned in inscriptions is not possible here, an analysis of some of them would suggest that from the Pallava period onwards temples tended to become centres of political power, leading to the decentralization of central authority. According to the Valurpalaiyam plates of the Pallava Nandivarman III such taxes as *nāḍāṭci, ūrāṭci* and *nāḍu-kāval* were transferred to a temple. The terms *nāḍāṭci* and *ūrāṭci* have been interpreted respectively as a fee for the administration of a district and a cess for that of a village. The word *nāḍu-kāval* perhaps denotes some kind of fee for keeping watch in the district. Whereas the first two taxes are also stated in the Coḷa records to have been collected by temples from the inhabitants of *devadāna* villages, the last is often indicated by a due called *pāḍi-kāval.* A lithic records from the central shrine of Umāmaheśvara temple at Kōnērirājapuram, assignable to the reign of Uttama-Coḷa (AD 970-85), grants, among other privileges, the right to collect the above-mentioned dues from villagers.[47] An inscription issued in the sixth year of Rājendra I (AD 1012-44) makes similar concessions.[48] Several other Coḷa epigraphs indicate that often the temples received from the king not only tax-free (*iraiyilli*) grants of land and villages but also the privilege of demanding from the inhabitants fees for running the local administration including district patrol. All this proves that temple came to be increasingly associated with administration, though our sources do not indicate the manner in which they may have exercised actual administrative control over the inhabitants of gift villages or of larger territorial units.

The weakening of the central authority may also have occurred on account of the grant to temples of the privilege of realizing judicial fines from the people. It is known from a Pallava record referred to above that already in the time of Nandivarman III a temple was allowed to collect *maṇṟupāḍu* from the local inhabitants. The term *maṇṟupāḍu* has been generally understood in the sense of fines imposed by a court of law and it occurs in a number of Coḷa epigraphs; they also mention two other fines as being enjoyed by the deity to whom land or village was granted. An inscription of the time of Vīrarājendra records that the king granted to the Paśupatīśvara temple the village of Pakkūr with, *inter alia*, the right to collect the three fines called *maṇṟupāḍu, daṇḍa* and *kuṟṟam.*[49] A record of Kulottuṅga III states that he donated to the Karuvūr temple the village of Maṇṇaṟai together with the right to receive *maṇṟupāḍu, daṇḍa* and *kuṟṟam* from the inhabitants.[50] That the judicial fines may have been collected by

temples is further corroborated by several Coḷa charters which confer upon them the right to punish criminals. An inscription of the fifty-seventh year of Parāntaka I states that if a crime or sin becomes public the god alone (i.e., temple authorities) shall punish the inhabitants of the village granted to the local temple.[51] Although our sources do not indicate that the temple actually functioned as a judicial court and sentenced criminals in *devadāna* villages, they refer to individuals who made gifts to the religious establishments for the atonement of their crimes. An epigraph from Tanjore speaks of nobles who donated livestock to the local temple for fulfilling a penance, apparently as a result of having been involved in a military disaster or possibly an abortive rebellion against the king.[52] A more clear example of some kind of payment to the temple as a penance for the commission of crimes is provided by an inscription from the Agastyeśvera temple at Mēlappaḷuvūr in Udaiyarpalayam taluk (Trchinapoly district) belonging to the fifteenth year of the reign of perhaps Rājendra I. This record refers to an undertaking by the temple managers to burn two perpetual lamps before the images in return for land and money given to them by two individuals as an atonement for a homicide committed by them.[53] According to a lithic record from the Ranganātha temple at Singaveram in the Gingee taluk (South Arcot district) dated AD 1058, a certain Kāri Murugan gave 96 sheep for a perpetual lamp in expiation of the sin of having killed Kōdaṇḍan Davan, the commander of Tāṇamaḍai Jaṇanātha-t-terindavilligal.[54] It also refers to one Vaikundaṇ Piccan who made a gift of sheep for two perpetual lamps for absolving himself from the sin of having killed two persons whose names it mentions.[55] These instances do not imply the actual collection of fines occurring in the land grants cited above. But they certainly indicate that the ends of justice could be met if one paid to the gods for the offence committed by him.

It is clear from our analysis that grants of land and village to temples during the Pallava and Coḷa periods gave rise to several important developments. In the first place, they increasingly led to an expansion of temple personnel who were paid in kind or through allotments of land. Secondly, they resulted in the growth of what may be called feudal land tenure as is evident from numerous epigraphic references to tenants on *devadāna* lands. Thirdly, fiscal concessions and immunities, which accompanied many grants, perhaps caused greater economic bondage of the peasantry. And finally, the endowments of land and village to temples weakened the central authority. All this tended to give a feudal character to south Indian temples.

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[2]S.R. Balasubrahmanian, *Early Chola Temples*; *idem*, *Middle Chola Temples*; *idem*, *Later Chola Temples*.

[3]M.G.S. Narayanan and Veluthat Kesavan, "Bhakti Movement in South India", D.N. Jha, ed., *Feudal Social Formation in Early India*, pp. 348-75; Veluthat Kesavan, "The Temple Base of the Bhakti Movement in South India", *PIHC*, 40th session, Waltair, 1979, pp. 85-94.

[4]*SII*, II, nos. 4, 5 & 92.

[5]It has been postulated that "royal patronage to temples produced political returns and served as an important instrument by which existing institutions could be adapted ... to serve royal purposes", G.W. Spencer, "Religious Networks and Royal Influence in Eleventh Century South India", *JESHO*, XII, 1969, p. 51.

[6]*SII*, III, nos. 1, 44, 489-93 of 1907; 52, 57, 508 of 1911; 165, 299 of 1917; 174, 176 of 1923. For a detailed discussion of temple grants during the Coḷa period see B.K. Pandeya, *Temple Economy under the Coḷas*, chapters II & IV. A refreshing analysis of temple endowments in early medieval Karnataka is seen in Sister M. Liceria, A.C., "Social and Economic History of Karnataka (*c.* AD 1000-1300)", Ph.D. thesis, Patna University, 1972, chapters I & II. Some of the recent studies of Coḷa temple grants are: G.W. Spencer, "When Queens Bore Gifts: Women as Temple Donors in the Coḷa Period" in K.V. Raman *et al*, eds., *Śrīnidhiḥ: Perspectives in Indian Archaeology, Art and Culture* (Shri K.R Srinivasan Festschrift), pp. 361-74; P. Shanmugam, "Tax Free Grants during Rājarāja I", *PIHC*, 45th session, Annamalainagar, 1984, pp. 177-81; N. Karashima, *SIHS*, pp. 21-35; James Heitzman and Rajagopal, "Temple Landholding and Village Geography in the Coḷa Period: Reconstruction through Inscriptions", *Tamil Civilization* (Journal of the Tamil University), III, nos. 2-3, 1985, pp. 6-31.

[7]C. Minakshi, *Administration and Social Life under the Pallavas*, p. 178.

[8]This can be inferred from a preliminary survey of the record of the Koranganātha, Kīḻapaḻuvūr and Tanjore temples. K.K. Pillay (*The Sucindram Temple*) has also arrived at a similar conclusion on the basis of inscriptions of the Sucindram temple. Cf. L. Nannithamby, "Village and Temple Administration in the Allur Inscriptions", *Proceedings Tamil Studies*, pp. 245-50.

[9]According to a recent author the earliest description of the temple girls is found in the poetry of Śaiva saint Māṇikkavācakar (9th century), though the Coḷa period certainly witnessed an unprecedented increase in their number as is evident from the epigraphic references to them and from the extensive terminology for various categories of female servants or dancing girls associated with temple establishments. Their appointment also tended to become hereditary (Saskia C. Kersen-

boom-Story, *Nityasumangalī: Devadāsi Tradition in South India*, pp. 22-31). Also see Awadh Kishor Prasad, "Functions and Gradations of Devadāsīs", *PIHC*, 45th session, Annamalainagar, 1984, pp. 192-9.

[10]*IESHR*, II, 1965, pp. 367-72; Appadorai, *Economic Conditions in Southern India (c. AD 1000-1500)* I, pp. 275-7; K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *The Coḷas*, pp. 653-4.

[11]*SII*, III, no. 43.

[12]Ibid., XIII, no. 106.

[13]Ibid., XIV, nos. 132, 153.

[14]Ibid., XIII, no. 51.

[15]393 of 1915; 729 of 1919, etc.

[16]*IF*, pp. 66 ff. Lallanji Gopal (*The Economic Life of Northern India*, pp. 215-21) also suggests a growing paucity and debasement of coins in north India during the early medieval period.

[17]D.D. Kosambi, *Myth and Reality*, p. 40, fn. 25.

[18]B.D. Chattopadhyaya, *Coins and Currency Systems in South India (c. AD 225-1300)*, p. 149.

[19]*SII*, II, no. 98.

[20]Most of the land grants, both in north and south India, contain imprecatory verses which are intended to prevent any future ruler or private individual from disturbing the grant in any manner. The upsetting of the arrangement spelt out in the land charters was viewed by the brāhmaṇas with great concern and was therefore often equated with the commission of the five great sins mentioned in the law books. See K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *The Pāṇḍyan Kingdom*, pp. 228-30; M.G.S. Narayanan, "Socio-Economic Implications of the Concept of Mahāpātaka in the Feudal Society", *PIHC*, 37th session, Calicut, 1976, pp. 111-8.

[21]Op. cit., p. 142.

[22]*SII*, XIII, no. 26

[23]Ibid., no. 46.

[24]Ibid., no. 44. An inscription of the time of Rājendra Coḷa III dated AD 1225 also records a gift of land to a temple by a private individual after purchasing it from another person (418 to 1904). Sometimes the *devadāna* land could be sold also to private individuals, as can be gathered from a record of the time of Rājarāja I dated AD 1000 which records the sale of land by a temple to one Kamban Manivan, the price being deposited in its treasury to be utilized for feeding brāhamaṇas and *śivayogīs* on all nine days of the Chittrai festival.

[25]Numerous examples of land transfer in which the temple was involved are available from the Coḷa period, though instances of secular sale of land was not altogether absent. See *SIHS*, pp. 31-35; Y. Subbarayalu, "The Sale Deeds in Early Medieval Tamil Nadu" (MS).

[26]N. Karashima, "Allūr and Īśānamangalam", *IESHR*, II, 1965, pp. 150-1. Elsewhere Karashima has tried to prove that the *brahmadeya* villages were the local nuclei of the Coḷa power structure, their function being to integrate and control the

surrounding non-*brahmadeya* villages (*Proceedings Tamil Studies*, pp. 233-50). Cf., T.V. Mahalingam, "Village Communities in South India", *Transaction of the Archaeological Society of South India*, I, 1955, pp. 33-46.

[27] *SIHS*, pp. 15-35. Cf. R. Tirumalai, *Land Grants and Agrarian Reactions in Coḷa and Pāṇḍya Times*. Cf. Rajan Gurukkal, "Aspects of Warrior Power in Localised Agriculture: The Case of the Pāṇḍya Region During the Early Medieval Period", *PIHC*, 47th session, Srinagar, 1986, pp. 192-98.

[28] There are in the temple 42 records out of which 40 are assignable to the Coḷa period. See T.V. Mahalingam, "The Nageśvarasvāmi Temple", *JIH*, XIV, pp. 83-99.

[29] As regards statistical analysis of inscriptions a good beginning has been made by N. Karashima, Y. Subbarayalu and Toru Matsui, though their work has not yet been very useful for the study of the kind of control temples exercised over land which were granted to them. For a detailed note on the work of these scholars see *infra*, chapter 7.

[30] Burton Stein, "The State, the Temple and Agricultural Development: A Study in Medieval South India", *Economic Weekly*, Annual Number, 1961, p. 179. Also see his "The Economic Function of a Medieval South Indian Temple", *JAS*, XIX, 1960, pp. 163-76.

[31] G.W. Spencer, "Royal Initiative under Rājarāja I: Auditing of Temple Accounts", *IESHR*, VII, 1970, p. 437.

[32] *IF*, pp. 6, 92, 266.

[33] 70 of 1924.

[34] *SII*, XIII, no. 281A.

[35] 409 of 1929-30.

[36] 388 of 1924.

[37] *SII*, XVII, no. 624 (578 of 1904).

[38] 429 of 1909. A recent study provides many examples of land being leased out to tenants. See R. Tirumalai, op. cit.

[39] *SII*, II, no. 98.

[40] Ibid., III, no. 205.

[41] 93 of 1910.

[42] 209 of 1925.

[43] It has been postulated on the basis of a solitary Hoysaḷa charter of AD 1272 (*EC*, IV, Hg., no. 39) that the conditions governing the lease of temple lands were more favourable and helpful to tenants than those relating to the tenants of brāhmaṇa landholders (Sister M. Liceria, op. cit., pp. 70-71). But this view is not supported by the Coḷa records which prove that the peasants and temple employees, who were assigned land for their maintenance (*jīvitam*), often protested, even violently, against the unjust measures adopted by the authorities of religious establishment. See N. Vanamamalai, "Consolidation of Feudalism and Antifeudal Struggles During Chola Imperialist Rule", *Proceedings Tamil Studies*, pp. 237-8; R.S. Sharma, "Problems of Peasant Protest in Early Medieval India" (MS.); cf.

M.G.S. Narayanan, "The Role of Peasants in the Early History of Tamilakam", paper presented at the Indo-Soviet Seminar on History of Peasants in Struggle, Moscow, 26-28 September 1988.

[44]167 of 1910.

[45]198 of 1925.

[46]21 of 1903.

[47]*SII*, III, no. 151.

[48]Ibid., no. 205. For a detailed study of Coḷa revenue system see P. Shanmugam, *The Revenue System of the Cholas, 850-1279.*

[49]*SII*, III, pt. I, no. 21.

[50]Ibid., no. 23. The above-mentioned fines seem to resemble the expression *daśāparādha* (fines from ten offences) mentioned in north Indian inscriptions from the Gupta period onwards (D.N. Jha, *Revenue System in Post-Maurya and Gupta Times*, pp. 89-91).

[51]*SII*, III, no. 12.

[52]*IESHR*, III, 1966, 285, 17.

[53]372 of 1924.

[54]*SII*, XVII, no. 249.

[55]Ibid.

6

Temples and Merchants in South India (c. AD 900-1300)

Evidence of gifts and donations to religious institutions by mercantile people is available from as early as the Sātavāhana period, when merchants, individually as well as collectively, seem to have financed the Buddhist monasteries in western India. But from the fourth and fifth centuries, with the decline in India's foreign trade and the resultant growth of closed and self-sufficient village units, the mercantile class gradually ceased to be an important factor in the social and economic life of the peninsula. It was not until the tenth century that trade with the Arab and the Chinese world was revived and merchants re-emerged as a dominant social group in south India.[1] Adequate inscriptional evidence may be adduced to prove that the various commercial communities and guilds became a significant feature of the south Indian social polity from the tenth century onwards.[2] This may explain why the bulk of donations made by merchants to temples belong to the time of the Coḷas and the succeeding royal dynasties. A few examples from the earlier period have, however, also survived.[3]

Of the various kinds of gifts to temples by merchants, donations of money and livestock seem to have been fairly common as can be gathered from several Coḷa records. The wife of a merchant from Tanjore made a gift of 30 *kāśu* for the maintenance of a perpetual lamp in a temple in the second year of Parāntaka I (AD 907-55).[4] A similar donation of 20 *kāśu* is recorded in another epigraph of the fourth year of the same monarch. A record of the reign of this ruler dated AD 921 found in the Vedāraṇyam temple (Tirutturaippudi taluk, Tanjore district) refers to one Kāḍaṇ Kalitongal, a merchant of Tandiram, as giving 90 sheep for a perpetual lamp in the temple.[5] The merchants seem to have continued their benefactions to gods throughout the Coḷa period and later. In a temple record from the Tiruchirappalli district (AD 1054-55) some merchants and devotees are

stated to have set up the image of a deity and given a certain amount of gold for the maintenance of offerings.[6] Another epigraph from the same place (AD 1055-56) tells us that some merchants donated 2 *kaḷañju* of gold for *sandhi* lamps in the temple. The record adds that the image of Śangu Parameśvari was installed by them and that the amount of gold they donated was collected from among themselves.[7] An epigraph of AD 1125 inscribed on a wall of the Tyāgarājasvāmin temple (Nagapattinam taluk, Tanjore district) records the gift of 17 *kāśu* for the maintenance of a perpetual lamp by Gangaicheṭṭi, who was the son of a horse dealer.[8] Apart from money, gold and livestock, the merchants are also stated in our sources to have gifted ornaments of gold and silver to the gods as can be gleaned from a later record.[9] References to individual merchants making gifts of gold, money and other objects to religious establishment may also be found in contemporary inscriptions from Andhra and Karnataka regions.[10]

It appears from a number of epigraphs that merchants also granted land to temples. A record from the Nāgeśvarasvāmī temple at Kumbhakonam, dated the fourth year of Parāntaka I registers a gift of 4 *mā* of land by a merchant for feeding a brāhmaṇa in the shrine.[11] Another charter of the fourteenth year of this king tells us that Samuṇḍan Mūrti, a merchant from Nandipuram, purchased two plots of land and gave them to a temple.[12] An inscription from the Chingleput district, issued in the thirtieth year of Kulottuṅga I (AD 1070-1118), states that one Vamban, son of a merchant of Pūndamali, endowed to a temple some land acquired through purchase.[13] Again, a deed of AD 1255, assignable perhaps to the reign of Rājendra III, describes a merchant as granting land to a temple.[14] A similar donative record from the Belgaum district of the Karnataka region dated AD 1162 informs us that some merchants and devotees, having purchased 2 *mattār* of land from the One Thousand Mahājanas, gave it to the god Agastyeśvara.[15] All this may imply that the practice of granting land to religious institutions was quite common among merchants of south India. But there is no evidence to prove that they granted land oftener than they donated money or gold.[16]

From the Coḷa period onwards many records refer to donations made by mercantile guilds. An inscription from Tirunayeśvaram, perhaps of the reign of Āditya I (AD 871-907) states that the merchants *(nagarattār)* of Kumāramārtaṇḍapuram donated every alternate year, the income derived from the flower gardens on the western and eastern sides of the local temple *(paḷḷi)*.[17] According to a record issued in the twenty-ninth year of Kulottuṅga I the merchant committees of Nellūr, Nārāyaṇapuram, Āṛkkāḍu,

Mayilāppūr, Tiruvorriyūr, Pūndamali, Neḍumbirai, Demanagacceri, Perungaḷūr and Tiruniru acquired the village of Kaivaṇḍūr and gave it as a tax-free *devadāna* to the temple of Tiruppāsūr.[18] Another epigraph of the thirty-eighth year of this ruler speaks of an endowment of land by the merchants to meet the expenses of the *Tiruvīdi* festival in a temple.[19] Several merchant guilds such as the *maṇigrāmam* of Kodambalur,[20] the *dharmavāniyar* (the just merchants)[21] and the *valanjiyar* of Tennilangai[22] are known to have made various kinds of gift to temples. In fact the Coḷa inscriptions from Tamil Nadu make frequent reference to the benefactions made to temples by merchant corporations and groups.[23]

The practice of making donations to temples by mercantile groups and corporations seems to have prevailed in other regions of south India also. Several epigraphs from Andhra describe the famous merchant guild of Pekkamḍṛu as making gifts to religious institutions. These benefactions, technically known as *magama*, were usually in the form of a certain percentage or part of the prices, of all or some of the goods in which the members of the Pekkamḍṛu traded.[24] In some cases the members of the guild also gifted land to the deities.[25] Donations by groups of merchants are also recorded in the Karnataka inscriptions. A lithic record dated AD 1072 from the Dharwar district mentions a gift of oil-mills, house-sites and flower-garden to the temples of Nakareśvara by the Nakharas (merchants).[26] Another epigraph from the Dharwar district dated AD 1080 refers to the guilds of the Baccas, Nakharas and guilds of dealers in jawar as granting to the god a certain measure of paddy which was to be collected from different shops.[27] An interesting record of the time of Cālukya Someśvara IV (AD 1184-1200), found in the Belgaum district, refers to several trade guilds as collectively exempting a temple from the payment of a specified levy. It is clear from the inscription that such guilds as the Five Hundred Svāmins of Ayyahole, the Seṭṭis, the Seṭṭiguttar of the Eight Towns, the Two Hundred Six districts, the Mummuridaṇḍas of all the Places, the Seṭṭiguttas of the Three Thousand and Four towns, all the Ubhaya-Nānādesigal, Birudas, Biravaṇigas, Gavaras, Gātrigas, the fifty Okkals and the Nakharas assembled in the temple premises and took the above decision.[28] Since the above donations were made by the collective decision of the guilds, they may have provided a sound economic basis for the temple-merchant symbiosis which goes against the theory of brāhmaṇa-peasant alliance propounded by Burton Stein.[29]

Most benefactions to religious establishments by merchants were ostensibly made to gain spiritual merit. But religious consideration alone cannot fully explain the large numbers of donations by the commercial

class. This phenomenon might have something to do with the desire of the newly-emergent merchant class to gain social status and prestige. The members of the merchant class are represented in some inscriptions to have descended from Kubera.[30] An early thirteenth century record refers to Vīra Balañjas (the brave merchants) as "born in the eminent line of Khaṇḍali and Mūlabhadra."[31] These and similar other examples that may be collected from epigraphic and other sources may imply that the newly-emergent commercial communities, gaining in economic status as a result of flourishing trade, began to claim ancient lineage, which only the priestly class, by virtue of its monopoly of the ancient lore could invent. Although our sources do not clearly indicate that the temple authorities or the priests fabricated dignified origins for their merchant patrons, it may be reasonable to speculate that they did so in return for mercantile financial support.

Whether or not the temple priests, like the Buddhist church in the earlier period,[32] gave any ideological support to the mercantile class is difficult to ascertain. But the fact that the merchant guilds financed Hindu temples present a sharp contrast to the practice in medieval Europe where the Christian church and corporations of traders and artisans operated as mutually antagonistic forces. The European church in the Middle Ages was itself a major producer of commodities. As a result of the privileges and exemptions the church enjoyed, the cost of production of articles of manufacture and the cost of merchandising natural produce was much less for the monks than it was for free artisans or merchants.[33] This naturally generated a strong feeling of economic anticlericalism in the contemporary European craft and merchant guilds.

In India, however, in spite of numerous privileges and immunities, Hindu temples did not engage in commodity production on any considerable scale. They were mainly concerned with the management of the lands and fiscal rights granted to them. Despite the increasing size of the temple staff,[34] they do not seem to have had enough artisans and craftsmen under their employ. Thus the Great Temple at Tanjore is stated to have had more than 600 persons attached to it. But out of them, only 30 were craftsmen whose services were evidently utilized for the requirements of the temple. Similarly a later inscription (dated AD 1280) from the Kolar district tells us that 52 families of servants worked in the Svayambheśvara temple;[35] but none of them seems to have engaged in producing marketable goods.

The possibility of any economic competition between the temple organization and the mercantile groups was further precluded by the fact that temple authorities do not seem to have invested in trade even small proportion of the vast amount of money and gold which they received from

various sources. On the contrary, they appear to have lent out a bulk of their capital to the local assemblies and a part of it to merchants. Spencer, on the basis of the 21 inscriptions, assignable mostly to the time of Rājarāja I (AD 985-1016) and Rājendra I (AD 1012-44), has pointed out that out of 9097 *kāśu* which the Great Temple received from its patrons, 8681 *kāśu* was lent to village assemblies and 416 to merchants.[36] Although in this case, the amount of money received by merchants, was much less than that received by local assemblies, the very fact that merchants derived a part of their capital from the temple was enough to inspire their charity to religious institutions.

That the merchant groups received part of their capital from the temple treasury was rendered more likely by their participation in the actual management of some of the religious endowments which is borne out by our sources. An inscription of the reign of the Pallava Nandivarman III (AD 844-66) informs us that the cloth merchants *(Aṟuvaivāṇigar)* of Śrīkaṇṭhapuram were held responsible for looking after a temple estate.[37] According to a record of the fourth year of Parāntaka I the assembly of Tirainur, the merchants of Tiruviḍaimarudil, the trustees and other officers of the temple assembled and made up an account of the gifts of gold made for the maintenance of lamps.[38] The Madras Museum copper plates of Uttama-Coḷa (AD 970-85) state that the weavers *(paṭṭasālins)* of Kanchipuram were asked to supervise the financial affairs of the local temple. The record adds that the merchant guild of the place was allowed full liberty to look after the proper management of the temple, to appoint its watchmen and clerks, and to exempt them from the payment of municipal taxes.[39] Thus it is evident that in some cases the merchant groups were closely associated with the administrative management of the temple and exercised control over its economic resources which might be regulated to narrow mercantile interests.

REFERENCES

*First appeared in Barun De *et al*, ed., *Essays in Honour of Prof. S.C. Sarkar.*

[1]For a discussion of the revival of trade in about the tenth century see, R.C. Majumdar, ed., *The Struggle for Empire*, pp. 520-26; Appadorai, *Economic Conditions in Southern India*, II, pp. 483-518; Kenneth R. Hall, *Trade and Statecraft in the Age of the Cholas*; Om Prakash Prasad, *Decay and Revival of Urban Centres in Early Medieval South India.*

[2]Appadorai, op. cit., II, pp. 559-617; K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *The Coḷas*, pp. 595-98; Kenneth R. Hall, op. cit.

[3]A stone inscription, assignable to the reign of the Pallava Nandivarman II (AD 731-95), speaks of a gift of pasture land by Idaivalanjan Kondan, a member of the local mercantile community (666 of 1922).

[4]246 of 1923-24.

[5]*SII*, XVII, no. 521.

[6]Ibid., no. 388.

[7]Ibid., no. 389 (359 of 1904).

[8]Ibid., no. 601. Numerous Coḷa inscriptions refer to cash endowments by members of the mercantile community in Tamil Nadu (246, 274 of 1923; 449 of 1925; 133 of 1926, etc.).

[9]*SII*, XVII, no. 455.

[10]*SII*, IV, no. 935; X, no. 473; XI, pt. I, no. 94; *EC*, X, Mulbagal taluk, no. 122.

[11]248 of 1911.

[12]*SII*, III, no. 100.

[13]121 of 1929-30.

[14]273 of 1925.

[15]17 of 1939-40 (*KI*, I, 53).

[16]The practice of donating land to temples by merchants in most parts of south India is amply attested by later inscriptions. By contrast records relating to Gujarat merchants of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries do not furnish any example of land gift to Jaina monasteries by Jaina merchants. I am grateful to Dr. S. Gopal of Patna University for this information.

[17]*SII*, III, no. 91.

[18]120 of 1929-30.

[19]91 of 1931-32.

[20]147 of 1888.

[21]547 of 1902; 550 of 1902.

[22]606 of 1922.

[23]189, 192 of 1897; 547, 550 of 1902; 442 of 1906; 3 of 1910; 371, 439 of 1911; 40 of 1915; 28 of 1917.

[24]*SII*, IV, no. 939; X, nos. 381, 422, 427, 473, 480, 495, 656, 567.

[25]Ibid., II, no. 55.

[26]Ibid., XI, pt. I, no. 112.

[27]*KI*, I, 14-23. This record also mentions a gift of paddy by two merchants in their individual capacity.

[28]Ibid., 39-40. For more examples of donations by merchant corporations in the Karnataka region see Appadorai, op. cit., I, p. 387. Also see R.N. Nandi, *Social Roots of Religion in Ancient India*, for a discussion of the linkage between the emergence of mercantile class and the growth of the Vīraśaiva movement in Karnataka.

[29]Burton Stein, *PSS*, chapter II. For a critique of Stein's theory see *infra*, chapter 7.

[30]Appadorai, op. cit., I, p. 380, fn. 196.

[31]*EC*, X, Kolar taluk, no. 17. Also see Appadorai, op. cit., I, pp. 380-1.

[32]It has been postulated that the Buddhist church extended ideological support to the trading class which financed its establishments (R.S. Sharma, "Material Background of the Origins of Buddhism", *Das Kapital Centenary Volume*, pp. 55-66).

[33]Thomson, *Economic and Social History of the Middle Ages*, p. 637.

[34]Wading through the vast mass of epigraphic material one gets the unmistakable impression that from the Pallava period onwards the temple personnel tended to expand.

[35]*EC*, Bowringpet, no. 38a.

[36]*IESHR*, v, 285-6. In view of the above evidence, Kosambi's generalization that money donations received by temples gradually came to be converted into uneconomic deposits (*Myth and Reality*, p. 40, fn. 25) has to be treated with caution.

[37]303 of 1901. R.S. Sharma (*IF*, Calcutta, 1965, p. 70) draws attention to an eighth-century record from Konkan area according to which eight villages and money granted to a temple were to be managed by the local merchants in groups of 5 or 10, who were instructed to supervise annual religious processions and were exempted from payment of tolls and rations for royal officers.

[38]*SII*, III, no. 124.

[39]Ibid., no. 128.

7

Relevance of "Peasant State and Society" to Pallava-Coḷa Times

Several American scholars have produced a good deal of historical writings and have sought to underline the necessity of analyzing the social and economic history of early medieval south India in terms of such categories as, according to them, may provide sound alternative to traditional interpretation. The most well-known of this group is Burton Stein who, after a long period of research lasting for about two decades, has come out with an apparently impressive work which integrates much of what he has published over the years in the form of articles.[1] Working on a large chronological canvas ranging from the Pallava to the Vijayanagara periods, he gives ample evidence of what he calls his "longitudinal interest" in the social and economic history of the macro-region of south India (excluding Kerala, Western Coast, north Karnataka and Telengana) and claims to remedy the deficiencies of the existing historical literature as well as to provide the "foundation for a broad, new interpretation of medieval south Indian history based upon a central concern with peasant society and culture"[2] as opposed to the concept of Indian feudalism discussed by us earlier. Here we propose to make a modest attempt to point out some of the weaknesses of Stein's understanding of the Pallava-Coḷa period and do not intend to provide a critique of all that he has to say in his book.

The concept of peasant economy and society to which Burton Stein attaches the greatest significance[3] is basically not different from the one found in the writings of the neo-populist Russian economist A.V. Chayanov, resurrected and strengthened in the West by several scholars (for example, Daniel Thorner, B. Kerblay, R.E.F. Smith, Eric Wolf, T. Shanin and others)[4] who prefer to use it as a substitute for the Marxist theory of modes of production.[5] Applying the concept to the study of the south Indian situation from the Pallava period onwards, Stein asserts that the peasant society, though dispersed, was the dominant social and economic

form of the age when most people, living in settled agricultural villages, thrived on the cultivation of land by family-sized units primarily of subsistence, industrial and service activities being a mere adjunct to peasant agriculture. The social structure of the macro-region, we are told,was marked by asymmetrical relations with those powerful enough to demand a part of peasant production, well-developed corporate groups within peasant settlements, and effective alliances among various corporate elements.[6] But Stein is quick to point out that relations between the Coromandel peasants and those with power to demand a regular portion of the peasant production were not the same as in other parts of India or other peasant societies. He argues that the idealized system through which such relationships operated in India involved the kṣatriyas who were not a strong force in south India where, apart from certain great royal lines of warriors (for example, the Pallavas, Coḷas and Vijayanagara kings), few locality warrior families achieved the extensive, prestigious, kin-linked organization of northern kingly groups so as to demand peasant surplus. The absence of an effective kṣatriya tradition is explained as resulting from the entrenched secular power of the brāhmaṇas who were anchored in a satisfactory alliance with localized peasant groups and other chiefs.[7] Evidently because of the absence of strong kṣatriya elements,[8] according to Stein's logic, the early medieval south Indian peasantry could not have much of asymmetrical relationship with people powerful enough to demand a part of its produce.

Looking only for symmetrical social relations as it were, Stein speaks at length of the close cooperation between brāhmaṇas and dominant peasants and does not hesitate in describing it as a voluntary alliance based on mutual benefits.[9] It has been argued that during Pallava times and later the Coromandel towns were bastions of Jain and Buddhist influence and hence the countryside offered the best situation for the support of resurgent brāhmaṇism. The brāhmaṇas were therefore most securely situated in the many peasant villages and localities of the plain.[10] There is little doubt that the early medieval period witnessed an unprecedented agricultural expansion in south India, as indeed in most other parts of the country. Also there was a phenomenal growth in brāhmaṇa settlements in the countryside and by the time of Rājarāja I (AD 985-1014) most of the *nāḍus* of Coḷamaṇḍalam, the heartland of the Coḷa empire, contained two or three *brahmadeyas* on an average.[11] Presumably on the basis of such information Stein postulates that the brāhmaṇas received massive peasant support in return of which they provided the peasantry opportunities for participation in Hindu rituals

through new devotional sects centering round temples and preserved its ascendancy in the social order which was all the time assimilating new peoples.

The theory of brāhmaṇa-peasant alliance has been challenged by Richard Kennedy.[12] Relying on Brenda Beck's study[13] of the dual division of left-hand *(iḍangai)* and right-hand *(vaḷangai)* castes, Kennedy points out that the latter group, with its primary interests in the soil, stresses lineage and the network of alliances achieved through matrilineal marriages. On the other hand, the left-hand castes, engaged mainly in artisanal activities and having little interest in the soil, are not tied to locality or descent and are a mobile group. Nor are they tied to local cult objects such as *naḍukal* hero stones around which the religious activities of the *satśūdras* seem to have centered. Viewed against this background it would appear that the left-hand *(iḍangai)* castes were the closest to the brāhmaṇas; the peasants who seem to have paid the greatest attention to *naḍukal* lineage shrines were unlikely to support the rise of a religion based on outside transcendent brāhmaṇical deities such as Śiva and Viṣṇu.[14] Moreover, Stein's theory assumes that brāhmaṇa settlements were situated in what appear to him to be the nuclear core areas with advanced agriculture where the priestly class depended on substantial peasant economic support. But this was not always true. Kennedy, in fact, suggests that a large number of Pāṇḍya *brahmadeyas* were at the foot of the mountains, at what must have been the border of uninhabited land which could not have sustained the brāhmaṇa peasant alliance[15] because local ecology could not have generated adequate surplus necessary for the maintenance of brāhmaṇas and their institutions.

Stein's assertion that learned brāhmaṇas and their ritual colleagues during Pallava times and later were mostly confined to the countryside and that the Coromandel towns were bastions of Jain and Buddhist influence[16] does not fit in with the available evidence. Inscriptions and Hsüan Tsang's testimony speak of the flourishing condition of Buddhism and Jainism in south India, especially at Kanchi, but during the Pallava period it was an equally important centre of brāhmaṇical religion and institutions and of Vedic schools called *ghaṭikā.*[17] The association of Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava saints with the city[18] and the existence of several Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava temples counter the view of Stein who considers towns to be the almost exclusive preserve of Jains and Buddhists in early medieval times. While initial association of Buddhism and Jainism with mercantile community and towns in the Gangetic valley remains true,[19] they seem to have

generally remained associated with urban centres in the Deccan and Tamil Nadu even during the early centuries of the Christian era. But when land grants became the common mode of maintaining the priests and other religious elements, the heterodox sects almost ceased to thrive on urban resources and underwent significant changes in their doctrinal and social aspects.[20] Moreover, Stein's misplaced emphasis on the alleged close relationship between the heterodox religions and Coromandel towns completely ignores the role that the development of *bhakti* cults and temple establishments may have played in the growth of urban centres during the early medieval period.[21]

Similarly the theory of alliance based on the assumption that the peasantry extended generous support to the brāhmaṇas is hardly borne out by evidence. The epigraphic material indicates that the maximum number of gifts were made by kings, members of royal families and feudatory chiefs and not by the peasants of *veḷḷānvagai* villages;[22] surely the peasantry seems to have hardly played any role in the creation of an ever increasing number of *brahmadeyas*. Solid evidence on this point is provided by an analysis of the personal names listed in a monumental study of the Coḷa inscriptions by Noboru Karashima, Y. Subbarayalu and Toru Matsui.[23] Their work lists 1862 names of individuals (except those of kings) mentioned in Coḷa epigraphs in the role of donors. Out of these, 334 donors belong to the feudatory status and 43 seem to have a distinctly vellāla origin. Of these 43 only seven names occur in the context of the donation of land. Evidently then Stein's assertion regarding massive peasant support to brāhmaṇical institutions does not inspire confidence.

Although Stein speaks at many places of the dominant peasantry as being a partner in the alliance with brāhmaṇas, he does not seem to pay adequate attention to the growing stratification within the peasantry itself—a phenomenon which would provide an entirely different perspective for understanding agrarian class relations in what he defines as the macro-region of south India. In this context he does not seem to fully appreciate the implication of the writings of Karashima *et al* published in recent years. As early as 1965, Karashima, on the basis of an analysis of the Coḷa inscriptions found in Allur and Isanamangalam, the two villages near Tiruchirapalli situated on the southern bank of the Kaveri, had postulated the prevalence of private landownership and hence the existence of landowners and cultivators as two distinct classes in the *brahmadeya* villages, a situation different from the one obtaining in the ordinary peasant *veḷḷānvagai* villages in the early Coḷa period.[24] Subse-

quently he has also adduced evidence to show that during the reign of Rājarāja I (AD 985-1014) there existed at least 240 *brahmadeyas* in Coḷamaṇḍalam (roughly corresponding to the present Thanjavur and Tiruchirapalli districts) alone.[25] If, following Karashima, it is assumed that there existed at least two or three *brahmadeyas* in every *nāḍu* in Colamandalam and at least one or two in each *nāḍu* of Jayaṇkonḍacoḷa-maṇḍalam (northern Tamil Nadu), the number of brāhmaṇa settlements in Tamil Nadu during the Coḷa period, though undoubtedly much less in number than the ordinary peasant *(veḷḷānvagai)* villages, must have been fairly impressive.[26] It would then appear that in *brahmadeya* villages, whose number was sizeable in the Kaveri valley, there existed two distinct classes, those of landowners and cultivators, and the latter were subjected from the Pallava period onwards to a number of economic disabilities ranging from insecurity of tenancy to oppressive exactions.[27] The landowning class consisted of brāhmaṇa residents and the membership of the *sabhā* (assembly) formed for village administration (for example, cultivation, irrigation, etc.) was confined to them.[28] Therefore in *brahamadeya* settlements brāhmaṇas, owing land and exercising control over agrarian resources through *sabhā*, formed the class of dominant land controlling elements and extracted the surplus from the vast mass of non-brāhmaṇa peasant families involved in the process of agricultural production, thus creating some kind of social cleavage—a phenomenon which Stein does not seem to recognize.[29]

In the ordinary peasant villages *(veḷḷānvagai)*, the process of stratification of peasantry seems to have taken place around the tenth century when communal ownership of land came to be weakened. In 1976, Karashima and Subbarayalu, on the basis of statistical analysis of personal names in Tamil Coḷa inscriptions, postulated that the emergence of local chiefs and landed intermediaries in the countryside had begun to undermine the autonomy of the village community.[30] The development of private land ownership at the cost of communal control of agrarian resources and the emergence of a class of landowners in the lower Kaveri valley has been adequately substantiated by an examination of epigraphic records which speak of secular land transfers in the region during the late Coḷa period.[31] The landowners or owner-cultivators *(kāṇi-yudaiyār)* are equated with the *nattār* of the *nāḍu* assembly, who appear quite frequently in south Indian records. As against this class, the lower section of peasantry consisted of small *kāṇi* holders, tenant-cultivators (denoted by the term *kuḍi* or *kuḍimakkan)* and the Paraiyas, who along with other communities (for

example, Pulaiya, Chakkiliyar, Ottaivanni, etc.) provided agricultural labour.[32] The available evidence implies that the process of differentiation, which may have started somewhat later in ordinary peasant villages than in brāhmaṇa settlements, was widespread by the late Coḷa period when the number *veḷḷānvagai* villages seems to have become fairly large.[33] This would then mean that by this time the ranks of the lower and dependent peasantry swelled up in non-brāhmaṇa villages, as was the case in the *brahmadeyas*. Although Stein speaks of the existence of dependent peasantry only in what he calls central *nāḍus*,[34] there is little doubt that this class existed throughout the area of settled agriculture in Tamil Nadu and adjoining regions and that the contradiction between ordinary peasants/ cultivators on the one hand and the land owning class on the other hand tended to become sharp.[35] Since this internal stratification of the peasantry may well have cut across *varṇa* lines, the theory of vellāl brāhmaṇa alliance remains an idle speculation.

It would be equally wrong to hold that the brāhmaṇa-vellāla alliance was an important factor in the formation of medieval agrarian order in south India. In fact from the tenth century onwards struggle for control over land or its products strained the relationship between brāhmaṇa and non-brāhmaṇa landholders.[36] If in the Pallava and the early Coḷa periods evidence of friction between brāhmaṇas and vellālas is lacking, this may be because rural society was not as sufficiently stratified on the basis of land control as it became later and not because of any alliance between these two social segments.

Not only does Stein fail to explain the growing rigidity of agrarian class structure; his theory of peasant society also completely ignores the heterogeneous character of peasantry in south India. His understanding that peasantry existed as a category separate from brāhmaṇas and other groups can hardly be true of a predominantly agricultural society most sections of which had interests in land and were connected with agrarian production in various ways and at different levels. In *veḷḷānvagai* villages, the vallālas were the chief landowners and dominated the management of agrarian resources; in *brahmadeyas* the brāhmaṇas, though they did not directly participate in agricultural operations, had major landed interests. Stein's persistent effort to equate the dominant peasantry with vellālas is untenable because this category included not only vellālas but also brāhmaṇas.[37] In fact large sections of both vellāla and brāhmaṇa communities, which did not possess land, may have been tenants; and the most destitute among the former perhaps also supplied agricultural labour, as

did the members of the lower castes like the Paraiyas, and the Pulaiyas. Kenneth Hall has adduced evidence to show that even merchants and their assemblies (*nagarams*) exercised control over land and had interest in its agricultural output.[38] The south Indian peasantry, contrary to Stein's assumption, was thus a heterogeneous collection of groups and classes; it cannot be thought of as a distinct and neat category, conscious of its aims and objectives and forging or breaking an alliance with non-peasants.[39]

The chief weakness of Stein's study lies in its underpinnings to the theory of peasant economy and society whose application to the medieval agrarian situation is not sustainable. In economic terms a peasant society is understood as an aggregation of family farms owned and worked by family labour. It subsumes the notion of a free peasantry owning the means of production and shaping the conditions of production, and rules out the possibility of an exploiting class directly inscribed in the immediate conditions of production.[40] But recent studies by Karashima, Subbarayalu and others, based as they are on a rigorous examination of Coḷa epigraphic material, convincingly prove that the effective control of land was in the hands of the big landowners who included brāhmaṇa donees, temples, institutions or their managers, non-brāhmaṇas or vellālas. It was in the logic of such a situation to lease out land to tenants who could cultivate it but could not own it. Not surprisingly the south Indian epigraphic material bears testimony to the existence of tenant cultivators right from the Pallava period onwards. But tenants could not always have carried on cultivation without wage-labour to which reference is found in the sources;[41] and surely the direct participation of brāhmaṇa agriculturists in agricultural operations, even though they owned land, remains extremely doubtful.[42] It is, therefore, difficult to argue for the existence of the family-labour farm which is an important feature of peasant societies.[43] Nor is it plausible to hold that peasants shaped the conditions of agrarian production. Their economic activity, in fact, was largely governed by the disabilities imposed on them by the landowning class which expropriated the peasant surplus.[44] Thus the historical reality does not conform to the theoretical model of peasant economy and society which fails to explain the medieval south Indian agrarian social structure marked by increasing differentiation based on unequal distribution of land.

Burton Stein extends his concept of peasant society to an analysis of the Coḷa state system and calls it a peasant state marked by peasant domination.[45] Drawing heavily on tertiary sources, especially the work of Subbarayalu,[46] Stein asserts that the *nāḍu*, a peasant micro-region, which existed

much before the coming of the Coḷas, grew out of the core settlements located along the river courses and was the most important administrative unit of the Coḷa period. In each of the 550 *nāḍus*, we are told, a dominant peasant group called *nattār* (those of the *nāḍu*) exercised dominance through their control of the cultivable land. Stein's equation of *nattār* with the dominant peasantry is based on his reading of the Larger Leiden Plates of Rājarāja I which, in connection with the grant of a village, contains the signatures of 27 persons of the *nāḍu*.[47] Of the 27 signatures, the title of six was *madhyastan* and ten were called *madhyastan-karanaṭṭān*. Stein has correctly interpreted *karanaṭṭān* to mean an accountant who later became an important functionary under the East India Company. He has, however, translated literally the term *madhyastha* to mean "people of the middle" indicating the position of "the dominant landed groups who sought to remain aloof from divisions within the locality."[48] This is quite contrary to the interpretation of the term which has been generally understood in the sense of a mediator, arbitrator, middleman (broker) or a village official in the existing historical literature. Nilakanta Sastri has cited inscriptional evidence to show that the *madhyastha* was a paid official under the employ of the village *sabhā* which fixed his remuneration.[49] In a few Vijayanagara records he also appears as an official valuer who fixed the price of land.[50] Evidently then all persons appearing in epigraphic records with the title *madhyastha* cannot possibly be equated with members of the dominant landed groups which, according to Stein, consisted exclusively of the vellālas. Moreover, it is only in the Larger Leiden Plates that 16 out of 27 signatories to the charter bear the title *madhyastha* or *madhyasta-karanaṭṭān*. This is not the case with a number of Coḷa donative records in which *madhyasthas* do not figure at all. In some cases the land charter mentions only a few *madhyasthas*. The Tiruvalangadu plates of Rājendra Coḷa I (AD 1012-44), which refer to only two *madhyasthas*, is a case in point.[51] Thus the identification of *nattār* with dominant peasantry/ vellālas/ *madhyasthas* appears to be a result of Stein's preconceived and unsubstantiated notion that the medieval south Indian state was a peasant state—a notion which is proved false by the available evidence regarding non-peasant participation in administration. Attention may be drawn in this connection to the recent work of Kenneth Hall who has adduced adequate evidence to show that the *nagarattār*, apart from exercising partial control over agrarian resources, discharged specific administrative functions (for example, collection of taxes, etc.) presumably on behalf of the Coḷa state.[52] Sometimes merchant groups also appear to have played administrative roles both in the Pallava and the Cola periods. An inscription of the reign of the

Pallava Nandivarman (AD 844-6) speaks of cloth merchants (*aṛuvaivānigar*) of Srikaṇṭhapuram as being responsible for looking after a temple estate.[53] The Madras Museum plates of Uttama Coḷa (AD 970-85) records an arrangement according to which weavers (*paṭṭasālins*) of Kanchipuram were required to supervise the financial affairs of the local temple.[54] It is thus difficult to agree with Stein's equation of *nattār* with vellālas or dominant peasants and his characterization of medieval south Indian state as a peasant state.

As part of his effort to provide an alternative to conventional interpretation of medieval south Indian history, Burton Stein offers a critique of the traditional view of the medieval south Indian state as unitary and centralized—a view propounded and strengthened over the years by Nilakanta Sastri, A. Appadorai and T.V. Mahalingam.[55]Contrary to their perception of the Coḷa state, he argues in favour of a polity in which the Coḷa government did not discharge any central state functions like collection of revenue and did not have at its disposal a powerful bureaucracy and military organization.[56] The decentralized political system of the Coḷa and subsequent periods, according to Stein, can best be understood within the framework of the concept of segmentary state, a concept he borrows wholesale from Aidan Southall's study of the Alur of East Africa[57] and uses almost like a refrain throughout his book.

Taking his cue from Southall himself,[58] Stein applies the segmentary model to the study of the medieval south Indian state, though neither seems to realize that the comparison of Alur state organization with the early south Indian state system is farfetched and unwarranted. Southall's work is an elucidation of the political techniques of immigrant groups in the process of establishing domination by an analysis of the particular instance of the Alur in Great Lakes region.[59] The people whom the Alur subjugated and incorporated into their segmentary political organization were "decentralized chiefless societies" in which "membership and nationality are comprised within the bonds of kinship".[60] Although the importance of kinship in early south Indian social formation cannot be minimized, the contrasting contexts of the Alur and the Pallava-Coḷa systems need to be appreciated. For instance, despite controversy regarding the origins of the Pallavas and Coḷas,[61] they are generally believed to be indigenous people and cannot possibly be equated with the immigrant Alur. There is, in fact, considerable evidence to show that in addition to the Cera-Coḷa-Pāṇḍya kings (collectively referred to as *Mūvarasar* in the Sangam literature), a good number of chieftaincies (known as *Chitarasar* or minor kings in Sangam works) were engaged in a continuous struggle for supremacy and

domination from very early times.[62] During the early medieval period the Pallavas and, more than them, the Coḷas had to deal with several chiefdoms (for example, Bāṇas, Noḷambas, Vaiḍumbas, Muttaraiyars, Koḍambālūr chiefs, Paluvattaraiyars, Kadavas, etc.) which were important foci of power in different parts of peninsular India, and which, in spite of the lack of satisfactory information pertaining to their administrative structure,[63] can be treated as being markedly different from the chiefless societies incorporated into the Alur system.[64] Nor can their territorial jurisdiction be said to have been coeval with the segments or zones of power as envisaged by Stein in his scheme of the Coḷa segmentary state.

One of the crucial features of the segmentary state organization is the existence of "numerous centres of which one has a primacy as a source of ritual sovereignty, but all exercise actual political control over a part, a segment of the political system encompassed by the State".[65] In medieval south India the segments of power were the *nāḍus* whose formation predated the Coḷas and was linked with peasant ecotypic conditions characterized by agricultural relationships based on soil type, man and animal power and agricultural technology. Presenting a rehash of Subbarayalu's work, Stein classifies the *nāḍus* as central, intermediate and peripheral in relation to the deltaic region.[66] In central *nāḍus*, found almost in every part of the macro-region, society was most hierarchical, Coḷa influence and political authority were most evident, and brāhmaṇas were most numerous. In the intermediate *nāḍus*, which lacked reliable sources of moisture for regular or extensive irrigated agriculture and were relatively sparsely populated, there were fewer hierarchical elements, the local chiefs were less fully incorporated by the Coḷa kingship and hence the sovereignty of other dynasties was recognized. The *nāḍus* of the peripheral type displayed the strongest tribal characteristics and were dominated by the local section of the major ethnic group (e.g., the Maravar, the Kallar, etc.).

Just as it may be difficult to appreciate the effort to provide a neat nomenclatural fit for complex geographical reality, so also it is not easy to agree with Stein when he asserts that the governmental significance of *nāḍus* lay in their ethnic coherence derived largely from "the spatially compressing character" of the south Indian marriage system (e.g., cross-cousin and uncle-niece marriages).[67] One may join issue with Stein here; for he completely ignores the obvious contrast between the ethnic coherence of the Alurs and the tribes incorporated by them, and the literate and sufficiently stratified society of the Coḷa and subsequent periods when proliferation of castes may have been an important social phenomenon in

south India, a development which is very much in evidence in contemporary north India.[68] Equally unacceptable is the notion of the administrative coherence of the *nāḍu* territorial unit which, apart from varying greatly in area,[69] was dominated not only by non-brāhmaṇa peasant groups (whom Subbarayalu and following him, Stein identify with representatives of *veḷḷānvagai* villages) but also by other equally important groups or agencies having diverse interests. One cannot doubt that the *nāḍu* included *brahmadeyas, veḷḷānvagai, devadāna* and *nagaram* settlements; nor can one possibly question the fact that each of these categories enjoyed considerable administrative autonomy.[70] The *nāḍu* thus could not have been a socially and administratively cohesive segment of power as Stein would have us believe; and a basic feature of his construct of segmentary state can thus be said to be non-existent.

The *nāḍu* segments formed part of larger territorial units which, borrowing Southall's term, Stein describes as "zones" and classifies into three categories—central, intermediate and peripheral. In this three-level structure of what he calls the Coḷa segmentary state, Coḷamaṇḍalam was the central zone; Toṇḍaimaṇḍalam, Pāṇḍimaṇḍalam and Nāḍuvilnāḍu were the intermediate zones, the first two being more important; and Kongu and Gangavāḍi were the peripheral zones. Each of these "zones" can be further differentiated into central, intermediate and peripheral *nāḍu* localities marked by features indicated above. Stein suggests that the central *nāḍus* found in every part of the macro-region, recognized Coḷa overlordship.[71] Accordingly the Coḷa territorial control was most effective in the Kaveri delta in Coḷamaṇḍalam, the Palar basin with Kanchi in Toṇḍaimaṇḍalam and the Vaigai basin in Madurai in Pāṇḍimaṇḍalam, though this does not accord with his major assertion that beyond the rich and populous core area of the Kaveri delta, which in his segmentary model was the primary centre of power, the Coḷa sovereignty was an increasingly "ritual" hegemony as the peripheral zones of the state were approached.[72]

Stein discusses at length the political culture of the segmentary state and postulates that the Coḷas exercised their "ritual sovereignty"over the macro-region through the network of brāhmaṇical institutions and by giving the royal status to the Śiva cult.[73] Among the 174 temples examined by B. Suresh on whose work he draws heavily, he tells us, the Śiva temples numbered 49 and constituted the largest single category; of these 22 were named after a Coḷa king or queen. The predominance of Śiva temples is seen as indicating an effort on the part of the Coḷa rulers to displace the local Tamil cults and, more importantly, to assert their "ritual" authority over intermediate and peripheral zones of the Coḷa segmentary state. This

formulation is based exclusively on an analysis of temples found only in the Kaveri basin,[74] and even this exercise makes it obvious that only one-eighth of the temples had clear royal association. Further, there is nothing to show that the examples set by the Coḷas in these cases were emulated by the ruling chieftains in the intermediate and peripheral zones. Stein's analysis misses the significant fact that the real religious and ideological integration of the people at the upper level in various zones was effected either through the spread of brāhmaṇical cults, rituals and institutions or through the brāhmaṇization of tribal cults, rituals and religious practices. For this various media such as Śaivism, Vaiṣṇvism and Jainism, which all were influenced by Tantricism, were adopted, depending on the local milieu and religious background in south India. The argument about "ritual sovereignty" is not clear; for evidently the priests were the masters of ceremonies. They adopted, invented, elaborated and disseminated the rituals. Ancient Indian rulers certainly exploited religion for strengthening and maintaining their authority. But this could be done only by cultivating the priestly elements which monopolized the rituals. This was done by making land grants to priests and temples, who played a crucial role in maintaining state power. The fact that a few institutions were named after some royal personages or some other "great" personalities does not mean that these personalities conducted rituals in the temples, although there is no doubt about the consistent economic support extended by them to various religious elements.

Even if Stein's thesis about the integration of intermediate (Pāṇḍimaṇḍalam) and peripheral zones (Kongu, Gangavāḍi) is accepted, he seems to be arguing against himself in course of his discussion of the zonal structure of the Coḷa segmentary state. For example, he speaks of the Pāṇḍyan warriors as challenging throughout the Coḷa claims to hegemony in the core regions of the Vaigai and Tāmbraparṇi.[75] Similarly the Coḷas conquered the troubled frontier region of Kongu in AD 1004 and could not retain it for more than a century after which they lost to the Hoysalas. We are also reminded that the Coḷas took Talakad, the capital of Gangavāḍi, another peripheral zone of the Coḷa macro-region in AD 1004, and could keep it under their control for hardly a century after which the territory passed on to the Hoysalas.[76] Thus whereas in the intermediate zone (e.g., Pāṇḍimaṇḍalam) the Coḷa authority was continuously challenged by the Pāṇḍyas, in the peripheral zones (e.g., Kongu and Gangavāḍi) it was of a much shorter duration than the total period of nearly three centuries of Coḷa hegemony in south India. It is obvious that the Coḷas did not exercise effective "ritual sovereignty" over the intermediate and peripheral zones

and even in the Kaveri basin their direct association with temples was extremely limited. The idea of the Coḷa "ritual sovereignty" therefore looks like a fiction.

The segmentary state model of Stein is mainly based on the assumption that the Coḷas did not have any regular uniform fiscal system which could enable them to claim directly a portion of agrarian production. Drawing as usual on the work of others—in this case on a statistical study of revenue terms found in Coḷa inscriptions from Toṇḍaimaṇḍalam and Coḷamaṇḍalam undertaken by Karashima and Sitaraman[77]—he points out that out of 27 frequently used fiscal terms eleven (nearly 40 per cent) are found in Toṇḍaimaṇḍalam only and that there surely existed a different administrative procedure and economic set-up in one *maṇḍalam* as distinguished from the other. On the basis of possible regional economic and administrative variations Stein hazards the conclusion that the Coḷa state was not unitary and centralized presumably because it could not enforce a uniform revenue arrangement throughout the macro-region.[78] Making too much of the absence of uniformity, he fails to recognize the possible influence of ecological variations on fiscal structure.

The segmentary state haunts Stein so much that he even misinterprets the findings of Karashima and Sitaraman in order to suggest that the Coḷas did not claim any share in agrarian production from even the central core of their territory. Since most of the terms mentioned in Karashima's list[79] of 27 most frequently used Coḷa revenue terms from Toṇḍaimaṇḍalam and Coḷamaṇḍalam refer to payments in labour or in kind, and since the process of their conversion into cash is not known, he seems to suggest that the Coḷas could not have collected any dues from the inhabitants of even the Kaveri delta which was the core area of their empire.[80] While an intensive contextual analysis of fiscal terms is necessary so as to distinguish the taxes payable directly to the Coḷa imperial treasury from those collected by local agencies (e.g., feudatory chiefs, *sabhā*, temples, etc.), one gets the unmistakable impression that the Coḷas funded the construction and maintenance of a large number of temples and educational establishments which obviously could not have been possible without a reasonably stable economic base and some sort of an institutionalized fiscal system. Stein of course tells us that Rājarāja I had accumulated great wealth through his predatory activities and tributes gathered from various territorial associations (*niyayam*) of the Kaveri delta.[81] But limited as this explanation is to the reign of the most powerful Coḷa monarch, Rājarāja I, neither of the two sources of income could have provided a lasting material base for the Coḷa state which dominated southern India for nearly three centuries; and surely

income from plunder, which presumably had to be shared by various participating groups,[82] could not have been a major source of wealth.[83]

Stein's view of the Coḷa revenue system based on the work of Karashima and Sitaraman ignores some very important implications that may follow from the data provided by them. A close examination of their findings shows that seven out of 27 most frequently used Coḷa revenue terms from Toṇḍaimaṇḍalam and Coḷamaṇḍalam first appear during period I (AD 846-985) of the Coḷa rule and gain greater currency from period II (AD 985-1070) which begins with the reign of Rājarāja I. Five terms, which first occur in period I, tend to become less frequent from period II onwards. The list of 27 terms enumerates eight such terms as are first mentioned in period II and become more common subsequently. Three terms find their earliest mention in Period III (AD 1070-1179) which begins with the accession of Kulottuṅga I and four in period IV (AD 1178-1279) beginning with the time of Kulottuṅga III. Evidently, periods II and III seem to be of crucial importance to Coḷa revenue history; for it was during these phases that a good number of tax terms are first introduced while certain other fiscal terms of the preceding period either gain or lose their visibility in the Coḷa epigraphic records. The significance of these two periods can be more fully appreciated in relation to certain known facts of Coḷa history. For instance, Rājarāja I undertook a comprehensive land revenue survey of the Coḷa territory in the sixteenth year of his reign (AD 1001) and a year later, according to Subbarayalu, he introduced a new territorial unit called *valanāḍu*.[84] Again Kulottuṅga I is said to have undertaken similar surveys in the sixteenth and thirty-eighth years of his reign.[85] Thus the revenue surveys and the introduction of the *valanāḍu* set-up coincide with Periods II and III during which a marked change is also noticeable in fiscal nomenclature. The changes in tax structure can thus best be understood as linked with the initiatives of the Coḷa rulers who must have exercised some control over economic production.[86]

Another basic premise on which the model of the segmentary state rests in Stein's total denial of the existence of a regular standing army and bureaucracy under the Coḷas. Since they are known to have led several military expeditions, some of them going as far as Śrīvijaya and Lanka, the existing historiography has tended to magnify their military prowess and has viewed them as having a monopoly of coercive power. Any military unit mentioned in inscriptions is assumed "to be part of a central military organization". Thus many *Valaikkarar* military units of the time of Rājarāja I have been considered not only as "the king's own" but as soldiers who vowed to sacrifice their lives, by suicide, if necessary. Stein rightly

questions such a proposition and draws our attention to the writings of the early epigraphists (e.g., Hultzsch, Krishna Sastri and Venkayya) who thought of *valaikkarar* warriors as being probably made up of men from various occupational groups temporarily engaged in military activities.[87] The merchant groups, for example, maintained substantial military force, as can be inferred from the Ayyavole records and the Polonnaruva inscription from Sri Lanka. Similarly artisans also appear to have maintained their militias.[88] Thus the contention that the Coḷas did not have a monopoly of coercive power would imply that their military involvements (predatory raids or territorial conquests) were largely dependent on the supplies from various local groups (e.g., *nagarams* and chiefs with whom they had a tributary relationship). But Stein stretches the point too far when from the possibility of the Coḷas not having a monopoly of military power he proceeds to postulate that the Coḷa state did not have a professional army.

In Stein's opinion the Coḷas did not have any executive authority and even in the more populous, diverse and wealthy localities (which, on his own admission, formed the core areas of the Coḷa state) it was in the hands of persons designated as *muvendavelār* and *munmudi* whom he regards not as royal officers but at best as locality chiefs who acknowledged the Coḷa ritual sovereignty as indicated by the Coḷa prefixes to their designations.[89] While his interpretation of these titles has been rightly questioned,[90] the connection of *muvendavelār* with Coḷa administration cannot be doubted.[91] He is not aware of the existence of an officer called *naḍalvān* who, according to the authors of the *Concordance*, governed the *nāḍu* territory.[92] Moreover, the authors have not only identified the holders of titles like Brahmarāyan, Pallavarāyan and Villupparāyan as occupying important administrative positions but have also listed 71 feudatory titles and more than 150 status terms found in the epigraphic records from Coḷamaṇḍalam and Toṇḍaimaṇḍalam, the central and intermediate zones respectively, of the Coḷa state.[93] Admittedly not all these terms may mean royal officers whose existence in large numbers was discounted by the decentralized nature of the Coḷa polity. But there is no doubt that an intensive analysis of the data available in the *Concordance* is likely to provide a fuller view of the Coḷa administrative organization, though Stein's total indifference to this work published two years before his own strengthens the impression that he is not willing to take into account any evidence which may modify, even partially, his basic assumptions. All this, however, is not intended to support the traditional characterization of the Coḷa state as centralized and bureaucratized but merely to underline the

fact that the segmentary model, based as it is on inadequate analysis of evidence, fails to provide a viable alternative.

Nor can Stein's half-baked ideas replace the growing understanding of the medieval south Indian state as feudal.[94] The writings of Karashima *et al* suggest the emergence of a land owning class and a corresponding undermining of the autonomy of the village community[95]—a phenomenon which is also borne out by the limited research done in relation to Kerala and Andhra Pradesh.[96] A clear assessment of the political and administrative role of the landed intermediaries in south India will have to wait till a comprehensive study of the linkage between the agrarian structure and administrative system is available. Nevertheless, one cannot ignore the fact that in many cases land gifts, ostensibly made on religious grounds, carried administrative privileges and immunities.[97] Similarly Stein's generalization that "fief as a constituted, political subregion of a warrior's private authority was largely absent from medieval south India",[98] lacking documentary support, is unacceptable. In fact Nilakanta Sastri and others have adduced evidence to show that officials were very often remunerated through assignment of land which they held on service tenure known as *jīvita* in the Coḷa records;[99] and in the case of the Vijayanagara period even D.C. Sircar, the most vocal critic of Indian feudalism, concedes that the *amaram* tenure was a kind of service tenure similar to that of medieval European form.[100] Stein's rejection of a feudal model partly rests on his assumption that in medieval south India the binding ties of allegiance characteristic of the lord-vassal relationship of medieval Europe are missing, though he is aware of the late thirteenth century inscriptions from Drakshārama (Godavari district, Andhra Pradesh) recording vows taken by chieftains promising exclusive allegiance to *Srī Parāntaka, Konerinmaikoṇḍār Sarvalokāśraya Śrī Viṣṇu vardhana Mahārāja.*[101] Perhaps anything similar to this has not been so far noticed in the Coḷa epigraphs, but Steins' sweeping statement should not be accepted unless it is supported by a rigorous analysis of epigraphic as well as literary material.[102]

Stein cavils at the appropriateness of the feudal concept in south India also because in his opinion there did not exist a moral order binding inferior and superior warriors as one finds in the moral authority of the Roman church organization in Europe and in the Samurai subculture (Bushido) in Japan.[103] He does not seem to realize that medieval Hinduism, though not as organized as the Roman church, did provide and enforce a moral order which bound together people of inferior and superior ranks. Apart from the *Nītiśāstras* and *Dharmaśāstras* regulating the ranked Indian (as indeed south Indian) society, there were several other channels through which the

influence of the feudal ideology was felt. The brāhmaṇas and a large number of *brahmadeyas* dotting the Coromandel plain played a significant integrating role in society—a fact which Stein has himself taken note of.[104] It would appear that an unprecedented growth of temples and religious establishments, *tīrthas* and the development of temple-centred Tamil *bhakti* movement not only served as a major prop of brāhamaṇical authority but also sought to legitimize what has been described as a feudal monarchy. In this context some recent studies have rightly underlined the social and political dimension of the *bhakti* ideology.[105] M.G.S. Narayanan, for example, has argued that the *bhakti* movement firmly established the feudal agrarian order supported by a graded system of hierarchy in caste.[106] It also cemented the relationships between kings, priests and the common people; for it "provided an illusion of equality while retaining the stubborn walls of inequality in the feudal system of production and distribution".[107] That the *bhakti* movement may have provided a kind of moral order in early medieval south India is further clear from an analysis of the jargon of the related literature which, it has been pointed out, is suggestive of feudal class relationship and corresponding ideology.[108]

Whether and how far the early medieval south Indian society can be called feudal depends on the outcome of a deeper study of its economic and administrative aspects. But Stein's summary rejection of the feudal model as a conceptual tool is uninformed; for he does not show any awareness of recent writings which seek to indicate some of the feudal traits of medieval social formation in the macro-region. Although there is much to question in the writings of historians led by Nilakanta Sastri, there is also more to appreciate so far as their interpretation of many significant technical terms in inscriptions is concerned. Stein's laboured attempt to replace the old generalizations by newfangled concepts (e.g., peasant economy, peasant state and segmentary state) not only ignores the contribution of a whole generation of elder Indian historians but also fails to take into account the recently published works and their implications. Stein has therefore yet to justify his claim to provide "the foundation for a broad, new interpretation" of medieval south Indian history.

REFERENCES

*Burton Stein, *Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India.*

[1]Some of Stein's important articles which have been integrated in *PSS* are: "Economic Functions of A Medieval South Indian Temple", *JAS*, XIX, no. 2,

1960, pp. 163-76; "The State, the Temple and Agricultural Development: A Study in Medieval South India", *Economic Weekly Annual*, XIII, 1961, pp. 179-89; "Medieval Coromandel Trade", J. Parker, ed., *Merchants and Scholars*, pp. 49-62; "Brahmana and Peasant in Early South India", *The Adyar Library Bulletin*, XXXI-XXXII, 1967-8, pp. 229-69. "Social Mobility and South Indian Sects", J. Silverberg, ed., *Social Mobility in the Caste System in India*, pp. 78-95; "Integration of the Agrarian System of South India", R. Frykenberg, ed., *Land Control and Social Formation in Indian History*, pp. 175-216; "The State and the Agrarian Order in Medieval South India: A Historical Critique", B. Stein, ed., *Essays on South India*, pp. 64-92; "The Segmentary State in South Indian History", Richard Fox, ed., *Realm and Region in Traditional India*, pp. 3-51; "Circulation and Historical Geography in Tamil Country", *JAS*, XXVII, 1977, pp. 7-27.

[2]*PSS*, p. 3.

[3]Ibid., p. 12.

[4]D. Thorner, B. Kerblay and R.E.F. Smith, eds., *A.V. Chayanov on the Theory of Peasant Economy*; M. Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics*, chapters 2, 3, & 4. Also see Eric Wolf, *Peasants*; T. Shanin, ed., *Peasants and Peasant Societies*, Introduction.

[5]Daniel Thorner, "Peasant Economy as a Category in Economic History", in T. Shanin, ed., op. cit., pp. 216-7. Mark Harrison has recently construed Chayanov's work as a theory of peasant mode of production ("The Peasant Mode of Production in the work of A.V. Chayanov", *JPS*, IV, no. 4, 1977, pp. 323-36). For a critical assessment of Chayanov's views however, see Utsa Patnaik, "Neo-Populism and Marxism: The Chayanovian View of the Agrarian Question and its Fundamental Fallacy", ibid., VI, no. 4, 1979, pp. 375-420.

[6]*PSS*, pp. 67-68.

[7]Ibid., pp. 70-71.

[8]A recent study (Kesavan Veluthat, "The Status of Monarch", *PIHC*, 43rd session, Kurukshetra, 1982), however, argues that the early medieval south Indian rulers invariably tried to achieve kṣatriya status through various rituals.

[9]*PSS*, chapter II.

[10]Ibid., p. 83.

[11]N. Karashima has suggested the existence of at least 240 *brahmadeya* villages in Coḷamaṇḍalam alone during the reign of Rājarāja I (*SIHS*, pp. 36-40). Some recent writings, based on an intensive study of epigraphic material from different regions, also give an unmistakable impression that there was a tremendous increase in the number of brāhmaṇa settlements in various other parts of the country, especially along the riverine tracts and in rice-growing areas: P. Niyogi, *Brahmanic Settlements in Different Subdivisions of Ancient Bengal*; Kesavan Veluthat, *Brāhmaṇa Settlements in Kerala*; M. Momin, "Aspects of Political Institutions and Social Structure in Kamrupa", M.Phil. thesis, Jawaharlal Nehru University, 1979; M. Santisri, "Brahmanical Settlements in Andhra Pradesh (*c.* AD 300-1000)", M.Phil. dissertation, Jawaharlal Nehru University, 1980.

[12]"The King in Early South India as Chieftain and Emperor", *IHR*, III, no. 1976, pp. 8-9. Cf. *idem*, "Status and Control of Temples in Tamil Nadu", *IESHR*, XI, pts. 2-3 (July-September 1974), pp. 263, 266.

[13]*Peasant Society in Kongu: A Study in Right and Left Hand Subcastes in South India*. Cf. Arjun Appadorai, "Right and Left Hand Castes in South India", *IESHR*, XI, pts. 2-3, July-September 1974, pp. 216-60.

[14]R. Kennedy, "The King in Early South India...", op. cit., p. 8. M.G.S. Narayanan has drawn our attention to the important role played by the community of arms bearing brāhmaṇa scholars of the *sālais* or *ghaṭikās* attached to religious establishments. Since the *sālais* had solid royal support behind them, he implies the existence of a military link between the brāhmaṇas and the kings—a link which was perhaps much more lasting and real than the so-called alliance between the brāhmaṇas and the peasants. See M.G.S. Narayanan, "Kāndalūr Sālai: New Light on the Nature of Aryan Expansion in South India", *PIHC*, 32nd session, Jabalpur, 1970, pp. 125-36. Cf. Kesavan Veluthat, "The Cāṭas and Bhaṭas: A New Interpretation", ibid., 36th session, Aligarh, 1975, pp. 98-109. In view of the above it would not be wrong to suggest that brāhmaṇas may have utilized their military link with kings to dominate all sections of society including peasants.

[15]Richard Kennedy, "The King in Early South India ...", op. cit., p. 10.

[16]*PSS*, p. 73.

[17]C. Minakshi, *Administration and Social Life under the Pallavas*, chapter XIII.

[18]A few of the important Śaiva saints associated with Kanchi are: Tirumular (sixth century), Appar (seventh century), Sundarar (eighth century) and Pattinathu Aḍigaḷ (tenth century). Among the famous Vaiṣṇava saints who had some association with the city are: Tirumalisai (sixth century), Yādavaprakāśa (eleventh century) and Tirukkachchinambi. See C.R. Srinivasan, *Kanchipuram Through the Ages*, pp. 242-68.

[19]R.S. Sharma, "Material Background of the Origin of Buddhism", Mohit Sen and M.B. Rao, eds., *Das Kapital Centenary Volume*, pp. 59-66.

[20]R.B.P. Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka (c. AD 500-1200)*, Appendix A provides a list of 167 land and village gifts to Jain monks and monasteries and thus renders Stein's views questionable.

[21]There is little doubt that along with the development of *bhakti* cults there took place a phenomenal increase in the number of temples in medieval south India. Also, quite a good number of temple sites emerged in course of time as important urban centres. A recent study by R. Champakalakshmi, for example, suggests that the twin city of Kudammuku-Palaiyarai, having a number of Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava temple establishments, developed as an urban centre during the Coḷa period: "Growth of Urban Centres in South India: Kudammuku-Palaiyarai, The Twin City of the Cholas", *PIHC*, 39th session, Hyderabad, 1978, I, pp. 168-79. Cf. Om Prakash Prasad, "A Study of Towns in Karnataka on the Basis of Epigraphic Sources: *c.* AD 600-1200", ibid., 38th session, Bhubaneswar, 1977, pp. 151-9.

[22]D.N. Jha, "Temples as Landed Magnates in Early Medieval South India (*c.* AD 700-1300)" in R.S. Sharma and Vivekanand Jha, eds., *Indian Society: Historical*

Probings, pp. 202-16. It has been pointed out that a sizeable amount of temple wealth often came also from the mercantile community in Tamil Nadu as well as in other parts of south India. See *supra*, chapter 6.

[23]*A Concordance of the Names in the Chola Inscriptions*, 3 vols., Madurai, 1978. A major methodological breakthrough in analyzing the source material has been made by an Indo-Japanese team, consisting of N. Karashima, B. Sitaraman, Y. Subbarayalu and Toru Matsui, who have for the first time stressed the importance of an intensive study of south Indian epigraphs which on a rough estimate may be nearly 50,000 in number. The team has been working systematically on the Coḷa epigraphs whose total number would be more than 10,000 of which a little more than one-third has so far been published. B. Sitaraman, N. Karashima and Y. Subbarayalu have jointly prepared an inventory of 3543 published Coḷa inscriptions ("A List of the Tamil Inscriptions of the Chola Dynasty", *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, no. 11, 1976, pp. 87-181). In 1978 Karashima and Subbarayalu in collaboration with Toru Matsui published the *Concordance* which is the first example of the application of statistical method to the analysis of inscriptional data. Apart from listing individual personal names, it includes the village name, the *gotra* or its equivalent, the father's name and contains statistically tabulated information about the status and caste of the individuals who figure in inscriptions. All this should enable a historian to get new insights into agrarian, social and administrative changes in Tamil Nadu during the Coḷa period. The Indo-Japanese team has used the statistical method also for preparing a concordance of Coḷa and Pāṇḍya revenue terms and of the socio and agro-economic terms mentioned in about 1000 inscriptions of Tanjavur district ranging in date from the eighth to the eighteenth century: N. Karashima and B. Sitaraman, "Revenue Terms in Chola Inscriptions", *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, no. 5, 1972, pp. 87-117; *idem*, "Socio and Agro-Economic Terms in the Inscriptions of Thanjavur District", *Studies on Agrarian Societies in South Asia*, no. 1, Tokyo, 1977, pp. 1-41; Karashima, Subbarayalu and Shanmugam, "The Pandyan Revenue Terms in the Inscriptions of Tiruchirapalli District and the former Pudukkottai State", *Studies in Socio-Cultural Change in Rural Villages in Tiruchirapalli District, Tamil Nadu, India*, Institute of the Study of Language and Cultures of Asia and Africa, Tokyo, 1980, no. 1, pp. 51-88. The Indo-Japanese team of scholars has thus rightly stressed the efficacy of the statistical method in relation to inscriptions which undoubtedly constitute a major source for the reconstruction of the social and economic history of south India.

[24]*SIHS*, pp. 1-15.

[25]Ibid., pp. 36-40.

[26]Ibid. Stein himself has indicated the existence of some 300 brāhmaṇa villages around AD 1300 (*PSS*, p. 150).

[27]D.N. Jha, "Temples as Landed Magnates…"., op. cit.

[28]For a discussion on the *sabhā*, see K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *Studies in Coḷa History and Administration*, pp. 73-175; *idem*, *The Coḷas*, chapter XVIII; T.V.

Mahalingam, *South Indian Polity*, chapter VIII; *idem*, "Village Communities in South India", *Transactions of the Archaeological Society of South India*, I, 1955, pp. 33-46.

[29]The brāhmaṇa settlements of the Coromandel plain, Stein rightly points out, maintained institutions essential for the preservation and transmission of Indo-Aryan culture (*PSS*, p. 171). Equally valid is his statement that non-brāhmaṇa population (e.g., artisans, merchants and ordinary cultivators) lived in these settlements in sizeable numbers. But the entire relevant section of his book (chapter IV) indicates his eagerness to gloss over the social contradiction in brāhmaṇa settlements.

[30]N. Karashima and Y. Subbarayalu, "A Statistical Study of Personal Names in Tamil Inscriptions", *Computational Analysis of Asian and African Languages*, no. 2, pp. 9-20; also see *Concordance*, I, Appendix 3.

[31]The emergence of a new agrarian order in the lower Kaveri delta is borne out not only by the frequent occurrence of such important titles as *uḍaiyan, araiyan, muvendavelān* and *nāḍalvān*, but also by epigraphic reference to secular land transfers which could not have been possible without the growth of private ownership of land, *SIHS*, pp. 15-35; Y. Subbarayalu, "The Sale Deeds in Early Medieval Tamil Nadu", (MS). Karashima suggests that the changes from communal landholding to individual ownership in the non-*brahmadeya* villages was owing to the distribution among the people of wealth accumulated through the imperialistic expansion during the reigns of Rājarāja I and Rājendra I. No less important reason for this change, according to him, was the introduction of new agricultural techniques (e.g., construction of dams, water tanks, etc.) which may also have destroyed the egalitarianism of the traditional village communities (ibid.).

[32]Y. Subbarayalu, "The Peasantry of the Tiruchirapalli District from the 13th to 17th Century", *Studies in Socio-Cultural Change in Rural Villages in Tiruchirapalli District, Tamil Nadu, India*, no. 1, p. 24. On the basis of the evidence from the *Periyapurāṇam*, a literary work of the twelfth century, the members of the Pulaiya and Paraiya castes, who suffered from numerous economic disabilities including restricted mobility, may be equated with serfs (ibid.).

[33]Of the 1300 villages in Coḷamaṇḍalam and Nāḍuvilnāḍu around the thirteenth century, 250 were *brahmadeyas*, about 50 were *devadānas* and 26 were *nagarams* (trade settlements) and the remainder fell in the residual category of *veḷḷānvagai* villages, *PGCC*, p. 34; cf. A. Appadorai, *Economic Conditions in Southern India (AD 1000-1500)*, I, p. 152; K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *The Coḷas*, pp. 571-4.

[34]*PSS*, pp. 134-6.

[35]D.N. Jha, "Early Indian Feudalism: A Historiographical Critique", Presidential Address, Section I, Indian History Congress, Waltair, 1979, cf. N. Vanamamalai, "Consolidation of Feudalism and Anti-feudal Struggles during Coḷa Imperialist Rule", *Proceedings of the Second International Conference Seminar of Tamil Studies*, Madras, 1968, II, pp. 239-43.

[36]In the early phase of Coḷa history the *ūr* and the *sabhā* figure together in public transactions and it is likely that in some *brahmadeya* villages both had an equal status. But the joint activity of the two assemblies seems to have ceased after the tenth century. In this context attention has been drawn to a mysterious order of Rājarāja I to the effect that the lands of non-brāhmaṇa landholders within *brahmadeya* villages should be sold away: Y. Subbarayalu, "The Place of *Ūr* in the Economic and Social History of the Early Tamil Nadu, 750-1250", paper presented at the ICHR seminar on "Problems of Economic and Social History of India", Madras University, 1-3 February 1977. Stein himself cites a late Coḷa record which speaks of high taxation on the vellālas, their protest against interference by the brāhmaṇas in matters involving the land taxes and the ultimate abolition of a special tax levied from them for the support of the brāhmaṇas (*PSS*, p. 224). R.N. Nandi has drawn our attention to many epigraphic references to conflicts between the brāhmaṇas and peasants in early medieval *agrahāra* villages of Karnataka: "Agrarian Growth and Social Conflicts in Early India", in D.N. Jha, ed., *Feudal Social Formation in Early India.*

[37]See below for a discussion of Stein's equation of *madhyastha* with dominant peasantry.

[38]Kenneth R. Hall, *Trade and Statecraft in the Age of Coḷas*, pp. 60-63.

[39]For a Marxist critique of the concept of peasantry as an economic category, see Judith Ennew *et al*, "Peasantry as an Economic Category", *JPS*, IV, no. 4, 1977, pp. 295-322; Gary Littlejohn, "Peasant Economy and Society" in Barry Hindess, ed., *Sociological Theories of the Economy*, pp. 118-56. Cf. Jairus Banaji, "The Peasantry in the Feudal Mode of Production: Towards An Economic Model", *JPS*, III, no. 3, 1976, pp. 299-320.

[40]Arguing against the existence of feudalism in India, Harbans Mukhia ("Was there Feudalism in Indian History?", Presidential Address, Section II, Indian History Congress, Waltair, 1979) has sought to prove that Indian agrarian history was characterized by predominantly free peasantry which not only owned the means of production but also controlled the process of production. But irrespective of whether or not there was feudalism in India, our understanding of the evidence with which he is familiar only through secondary works reveals that the theory of royal ownership of land became sufficiently strong in early medieval times when kings/chiefs made land or village donations on a large scale to priests and officers who, in turn, derived their ownership rights from their benefactors. Such a situation seems to have precluded the possibility of ordinary peasants owning land. Similarly the economic demands made by landed intermediaries, of which we have ample evidence in inscriptions, must have very often conditioned the processes of agrarian production and militated against peasant freedom. For evidence of peasant subjection, see *IF, passim*; *SCNI*, chapters 3 &6; B.N.S. Yadava, "Immobility and Subjection of Indian Peasantry in Early Medieval Complex", *IHR*, I, no. I, 1974; *idem*, "The Accounts of the Kali Age and the Transition from Antiquity to the Middle Ages", ibid., V, nos. 2-3, July 1978-January 1979; *idem*, "The Problem of

the Emergence of the Feudal Relations in Early India", Presidential Address, Section I, Indian History Congress, Bombay, 1980.

[41]Nilakanta Sastri, *The Coḷas*, p. 569.

[42]Eva Ritschl ("Brahmanische Bauern", *Altorientalische Forschungen*, VII, 1980, pp. 177-87) has, however, argued that in early medieval times a good number of brāhmaṇas may have participated in agricultural operations.

[43]The non-brāhmaṇa peasant families may have participated in agricultural operations and may have constituted units of seigneurial exaction. But there is hardly any evidence to prove that they invariably owned land and cultivated it mainly through family labour. If contemporary north Indian rural life is any indication of the past, the lower orders invested their family labour in land which was owned by others.

[44]For a discussion of temples as expropriators of surplus and as imposing disabilities on peasants, see D.N. Jha, "Temples as Landed Magnates...", op. cit. The question of increasing economic burden on peasants during the period AD 600-1200 has been discussed in D.N. Jha, "Early Indian Feudalism...", op. cit. Also see N. Karashima and B. Sitaraman, "Revenue Terms in Chola Inscription", op. cit.; Karashima, Subbarayalu and Shanmugam, "The Pandyan Revenue Terms...", op. cit.

[45]*PSS*, p. 8.

[46]*PGCC*, pp. 32-33.

[47]*EI*, XXII, p. 259.

[48]*PSS*, p. 121.

[49]Nilakanta Sastri, *The Coḷas*, pp. 510-1.

[50]T.V. Mahalingam, *Administration and Social Life under Vijayanagar*, pt. I, p. 247.

[51]*SII*, III, no. 205.

[52]Kenneth, R. Hall, op. cit., chapters 3 & 4.

[53]303 of 1901. R.S. Sharma, (*IF*, p. 70) refers to an eighth-century record from the Konkan area according to which eight villages and money granted to a temple were to be managed by the local merchants in groups of five or ten, who were instructed to supervise annual religious processions and were exempted from payment of tolls and rations for royal officers.

[54]*SII*, III, no. 128.

[55]*PSS*, chapter VII. For Burton Stein's assessment of the conventional writings on medieval south Indian state, see his "The State and the Agrarian Order in Medieval South India: A Historiographical Critique", op. cit., pp. 64-91.

[56]Stein is unequivocal in his rejection of the feudal model for analyzing the decentralized polity of medieval south India, (ibid.).

[57]Aidan Southall, *Alur Society: A Study in Process and Types of Domination.*

[58]Ibid., pp. 257-8. [59]Ibid., p. 228. [60]Ibid., p. 234.

[61]For different views on the origin and early history of these dynasties, see C. Minakshi, op. cit., chapter 1; K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *The Coḷas*, chapters II & III.

[62]M.G.S. Narayanan, *Reinterpretations in South Indian History*, pp. 5-6, 10-12. Adequate relevant data should be hopefully available in T.V. Kuppusvami, "Sangam Chieftains and Their Times", Ph.D. thesis, Kerala University, 1976, cited in T.K. Venkatasubramaniam, "Chieftaincies of the Sangam Age: A Development Approach", *PIHC*, 42nd session, Bodhgaya, 1981, pp. 82-94.

[63]The south Indian chieftaincies have often been described as feudatories in the existing corpus of historical literature which, however, does not tell us anything about their political organization. M.S. Govindaswamy, *The Role of the Feudatories in the Pallava History*, and V. Balambal, *Feudatories of South India 800-1200 AD*, are informative studies of dynastic details but do not give us any insight into the social polity of the regions in which the feudatories were prominent at different points of time.

[64]Nicholas B. Dirks rightly observes that the segmentary state model is not "culturally sensitive enough to identify the differences between East Africa and India": "Political Authority and Structural Change in South Indian History", *IESHR*, XII, no. 2, April-June 1976, p. 126.

[65]*PSS*, p. 274. [66]Ibid., chapter III. [67]Ibid.

[68]In the context of north India it has been convincingly shown that the early medieval period was one of proliferation of castes owing, among other things, to the growth of strong feudal localism and the absorption of the tribal peoples into the brāhmaṇical fold, R.S. Sharma, *Social Changes in Early Medieval India*; B.N.S. Yadava, *SCNI*. Although no similar study of social change in south India has been made, it may be suggested that some of the factors (e.g., assimilation of tribal population into brāhmaṇical *varṇa* scheme) leading to the increase in the number of castes in north India also operated in the peninsular region. Not surprisingly the *Concordance* lists 32 castes which occur in the Coḷa inscriptions in various contexts and which may have often claimed conflicting mythological origins and observed connubial and commensal restrictions, see A. Appadorai, *Economic Conditions of Southern India*, I, pp. 380-1. Cf. Y. Subbarayalu, "Social Change in Tamil Nadu in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries AD", *Proceedings*, South Indian History Congress, 2nd sessoin, Trivandrum, 1981, pp. 138-42.

[69]*PGCC*, pp. 21-22.

[70]The administrative autonomy of *brahmadeya* and *devadāna* settlements has been discussed by several south Indian historians, notably Nilakanta Sastri, Appadorai and T.V. Mahalingam. Kenneth R. Hall has analyzed Coḷa epigraphic material to underline the importance of *nagaram* as an administrative institution (op. cit., chapters 3 & 4).

[71]*PSS*, p. 134.

[72]Ibid., p. 321.

[73]Ibid., chapter VII, Sec. IV.

[74]B. Suresh, "Historical and Cultural Geography and Ethnology of South India with Special Reference to Coḷa Inscriptions", Ph.D. thesis, Deccan College Post-graduate and Research Institute, Poona, 1965, cited in PSS, p. 327.

[75]*PSS*, p. 299. [76]Ibid., p. 317.
[77]Karashima and Sitaraman, "Revenue Terms in Chola Inscriptions", op. cit.
[78]*PSS*, pp. 260-4.
[79]Karashima and Sitaraman, "Revenue Terms in Chola Inscriptions", op. cit.
[80]*PSS*, pp. 260-3. [81]Ibid., p. 333.
[82]The Coḷa army was not a monolithic force but was composed of various vassal units under the royal banner (Nilakanta Sastri, *The Coḷas*, pp. 453-7). The merchant regiments, being one of its components, not only participated in the Coḷa military activities but also shared the war booty: Kenneth R. Hall, op. cit., pp. 192-3; cf. W.M.K. Wijatunga, "South Indian Corporate Commercial Organisations in South and South-East Asia", *Proceedings of the First International Conference Seminar of Tamil Studies, Kuala Lumpur,* 1964, I, p. 507, fn. 51. Similarly the possible military link between the king and the brāhmaṇas, referred to above, may imply that the latter also lent armed support to the military expeditions undertaken by the early medieval south Indian state.
[83]The notion of the absence of an institutionalized fiscal system has also been supported by George W. Spencer, "The Politics of Plunder: The Cholas in Eleventh Century Ceylon", *JAS*, XXXV, no. 3, 1976, pp. 405-19; *idem, The Politics of Expansion: The Chola Conquest of Sri Lanka and Srī Vijaya*. He rightly distinguishes plunder from taxation (a highly rationalized exaction based upon enumeration of lands, produce, goods or population) and tribute (indirect negotiable exaction imposed upon chiefs or other intermediaries, varying according to the relative strength of the parties involved), but seeks to wrongly underline the primacy of the first in the dynamics of the Coḷa state system. It is, in fact, difficult to imagine a political system exercising its authority in some form or the other over a large number of agrarian settlements without controlling to a significant extent their economic resources and thriving mainly on plunder which could have been at best only one of the channels for the inflow of wealth. Moreover, Spencer's analysis of the invasions of Sri Lanka by the Coḷas does not pay adequate attention to the possible influence of long-term commercial interests and he understands them as purely predatory raids into Sri Lanka. Cf. M.G.S. Narayanan, "Recent Work and Research Problems in Social and Economic History of Ancient and Medieval South India" (mimeographed), paper presented at the UGC Seminar on Historiography, University of Calicut, 18-24 April 1977.
[84]*PGCC*, pp. 56-57.
[85]Ibid., p. 68.
[86]For a recent full-length-study of the Coḷa fiscal system see P. Shanmugam, *Revenue System of the Cholas 850-1279.*
[87]Burton Stein, "The State and the Agrarian Order…"., op. cit.
[88]Kenneth R. Hall, op. cit., pp. 192-3.
[89]*PSS*, pp. 111-2.
[90]R. Champakalakshmi, "Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India: A Review Article", *IESHR*, XVIII, nos. 3-4, July-December 1981, pp. 415-6.

[91]*Concordance*, I, Appendix 3.

[92]Ibid. Interestingly the mention of the term *madhyastha*, interpreted by Stein as "people of the middle" (*PSS*, p. 121), becomes less frequent and the term *nāḍalvān* gains greater currency from the time of Rājarāja I. It has been suggested that this may imply the gradual undermining of the autonomy of the *nāḍus* which came to be increasingly controlled by the latter (*Concordance*, I, Appendix 3)—a possibility also corroborated by a recent work (P. Regupati, "Local Administration in Taml Country from AD 1300 to AD 1530", p. 86) which speaks of the Coḷa government appointing officers e.g., *nadu vagai cheyyar, nāḍu kuru cheyyar, nāḍu kankani nayagam* at the *naḍu* level who were not servants of the *nattār*.

[93]*Concordance*, I, Appendix 1, list 4.

[94]For Stein's criticism of the feudal model, see his "The State and the Agrarian Order...", op. cit., pp. 83-88.

[95]*Supra*.

[96]M.G.S. Narayanan, "Political and Social Conditions of Kerala under the Kulaśekhara Empire, *c.* AD 800-1124", Ph.D. thesis, Kerala University, 1972; Kesavan Veluthat, *Brāhmaṇa Settlements in Kerala*; Rajan Gurukkal, "Socio-Economic Role of the Kerala Temple", M. Phil. thesis, Jawaharlal Nehru University, 1977; K.N. Ganesh, "Some Aspects of the Agrarian Structure in Early Venad", M. Phil. thesis, Jawaharlal Nehru University, 1979;Rajan Gurukkal, "The Agrarian System and Socio-Political Organisation under the Early Pāṇḍyas", Ph.D. thesis, Jawaharlal Nehru University, 1984; Kesaven Veluthat, "The Power Structure of Monarchy in South India (*c.* AD 600-1300)", Ph.D. thesis, Jawaharlal Nehru University, 1957.

[97]D.N. Jha, "Temples as Landed Magnates...", op. cit.

[98]Stein, "The State and the Agrarian Order...", op. cit., p. 85.

[99]K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *The Coḷas*, p. 464. In a recent study attention has been drawn to numerous epigraphical references to *jīvitas* held by royal servants in southern Kerala, K.N. Ganesh, "Economic Conditions and Political Authority in Venad" (mimeographed), paper presented at the Indian History Congress, 43rd session, Kurukshetra, 1982.

[100]D.C. Sircar, ed., *Land System and Feudalism in Ancient India*, p. 57.

[101]Stein, "The State and the Agrarian Order...", op. cit., p. 86, fn. 58, p. 91.

[102]In the case of north India, B.N.S. Yadava has brought to light considerable evidence which throws welcome light on the lord-vassal relationship, *SCNI*, chapters 3 & 4.

[103]"The State and the Agrarian Order...", op. cit., p. 86.

[104]*PSS*, ch. IV, Stein, "Integration of the Agrarian System of South India", op. cit., pp. 175-216.

[105]For early North Indian *bhakti*, see S. Jaiswal, *Origin and Development of Vaiṣṇavism*, 2nd edn., M.G.S. Narayanan and Kesavan Veluthat, "The *Bhakti* Movement in South India", in D.N. Jha, ed., *Feudal Social Formation in Early India*; Kesavan Veluthat, "The Socio-Political Background of Kulaśekhara Alvar's

Bhakti", *PIHC*, 38th session, Bhubaneswar, 1977, pp. 137-45; *idem*, "Royalty and Divinity: Legitimisation of Monarchical Power in South India", ibid., 39th session, Hyderabad, 1978, pp. 241-9; *idem*, "The Temple Base of the *Bhakti* Movement in South India", ibid., 40th session, Waltair, 1979, pp. 185-94; R.N. Nandi, "Some Social Aspects of the *Nalayira Prabandham*", ibid., 37th session, Calicut, 1976, pp. 118-23.

[106]Narayanan, "The *Bhakti* Movement in South India", op. cit.

[107]Ibid., p. 45.

[108]Ibid., p. 51.

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